



ROSE STANDISH NICHOLS

STRESA

COMO

MILAN

PAVIA

VICENZA

VENICE

VERONA

PADUA

PARMA

FERRARA

GENOA

BINO

RUGIA

TIVOLI

FRASCATI

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PALERMO

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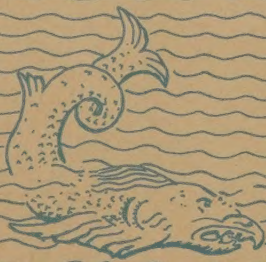






# GARDEN CENTERS <sup>in</sup> ITALY

ROME	FLORENCE	SIENA
VITERBO	PALERMO	LUCCA
TIVOLI	VERONA	GENOA
FRASCATI	PADUA	MILAN
VICENZA COMO STRESA		



SCALE IN ENGLISH MILES





ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS









THE TERRACE, VILLA PALMIERI, NEAR FLORENCE

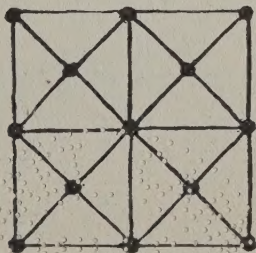


# ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

*By*

ROSE STANDISH NICHOLS

*Author of Spanish and Portuguese Gardens  
and English Pleasure Gardens*

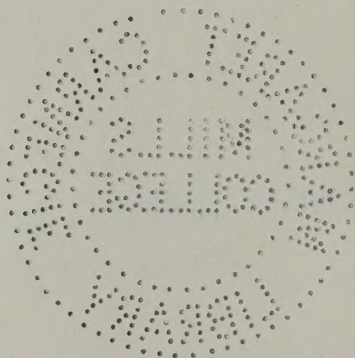


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54034

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N6212

*To*

MY MOTHER

ELIZABETH FISHER NICHOLS





## FOREWORD

For many centuries Italian villas have proved an unfailing source of inspiration to garden-lovers. Often as we may return to visit their pleasure grounds, seldom, if ever, do we cease to find in them new beauties. Even the great historic country-seats, so frequently described, contain interesting features that usually have been overlooked, while many of their humbler neighbours have wholly escaped attention. To include them all in one book would be impossible. My aim has been to select the best and most typical examples, whether large or small, old or new.

To those travellers who are weary of cities and who love both art and nature I can recommend these gardens as a joy to the eye and balm to the soul. Within moss-grown walls, where slender cypresses frame lovely vistas stretching to the horizon and fountains refresh the air, there is a peace that passes understanding.

No method of classification has proved satisfactory. Designs vary not only according to their age but their environment. Many villas have been al-

## FOREWORD

tered by their successive owners so frequently that they belong equally to several different periods without having lost their original charm. Purity of style seems to have been but little valued in the past.

In the course of my garden-hunt the unfailing courtesy that I have encountered everywhere makes an individual acknowledgment here practically impossible. I can only say that without much kind assistance I could not have begun to bring together this far from complete collection.

For permission to reproduce a plan from "Les San Gallo," by G. Clausse, I wish to thank the publishers, the Maison Ernest Leroux of Paris. Several woodcuts in "Mediæval Gardens," by Sir Frank Crisp, have been reproduced through the courtesy of his daughter Mrs. Paterson. I am also grateful to the garden-architects, Messrs. Myers, Fulkerson and Carrère, and to the professional photographers, Messrs. Anderson, Alinari, Brogi and Moscioni, for allowing me to use copies of their photographs. Other illustrations have been kindly given me by Mrs. Bernard Berenson, Marchese Piero Antinori, Count Pecci Blunt and Miss Belle da Costa Greene of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

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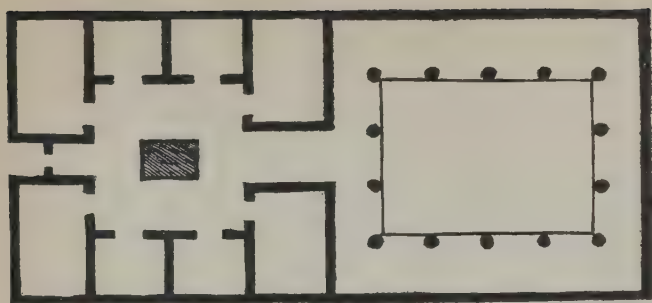
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## ATRIUM AND PERISTYLE

### CHAPTER I

#### POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

SOUTHERN Italy, lying at the crossways of intercourse between Europe, Asia and Africa, embraced for hundreds of years various important cultural centres. Here conquering hosts—Samnite, Greek and Roman—imposed their sway upon early Etruscan or Oscan settlements. Here peaceful travellers from the four points of the compass came bringing, not only costly merchandise, but a wealth of novel ideas. From far and near Phœnicians, Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans remained to found separate colonies or to intermingle with the inhabitants already living there.

Imagine the Bay of Naples in the prime of the Roman Empire! The natural beauty of the purple-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

veiled mountains rising above the translucent depths of the blue-green sea, with fairy-like islands half lost on the misty horizon, was enhanced by a garland of picturesque towns and spacious villas girdling the great semi-circle that begins where Cape Misenum points westward to the islands of Procida and Ischia and curves around to the south-eastern promontory, where the Sorrentine peninsula approaches the island of Capri. Rising majestically halfway between the horns of this crescent, with green slopes fading into barren summits, towers smoking Vesuvius. *Puteoli*, now Pozzuoli, (with nothing but an ammunition factory to distinguish it today) founded by the Greeks in the sixth century before Christ, became under Roman rule, the chief commercial centre of Italy and far surpassed in importance the neighbouring city of Naples, then a Greek colony known as *Parthenope*. *Cumæ* and *Bajæ*, most fashionable of seaside resorts in the time of the Empire, were also of Greek origin.

Magnificent villas were built by Nero and Cassius, at *Bajæ*. Castles belonging to Marius, Pompejus, and Cæsar crowned the heights above, while the elder Scipio erected a veritable stronghold with imposing towers, not far from there, at Liternum. Augustus had his "Sans Souci" or *Pausilipon* on the coast near

## POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

the present Posilipo. Luxury-loving Lucullus erected a villa with terraced gardens at Cape Misenum and spread another residence over the entire hill of Pizzafalcone and the site of the present *Castel dell' Uovo*. On the western side of the Bay, at Resina, was the country-house of Argus containing some especially good wall-paintings. Beyond lay the rich little town of Herculaneum, where many of the beautiful bronzes in the Naples Museum were disinterred. From the Villa of the Papyri in this neighbourhood came a remarkable collection of ninety bronze figures. Among them were four dignified dancing-girls in the Greek style of the fifth century before Christ the celebrated seated Mercury, and a Christlike head of Dionysus. The pious Marcus Aurelius spent the warm weather in his villa at Sorrento, now a popular resort especially in summer. Augustus cherished a favourite villa at Capri, while Tiberius lived for ten years on the northeastern Capriote headland and left behind him a reputation that still horrifies the islanders.

Pompeii, lying near the sea at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, was a town of comparatively little importance and seems to have attracted few celebrated visitors. We know almost nothing of its early history except that it was founded by the Oscans, an Italic tribe,

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

conquered by their kinsmen the Samnites in 425 B. C., and that finally it came under Roman dominion in 80 B. C. During the five or six centuries, when it led a flourishing but inconspicuous existence, the ancient writers passed it by in silence. Only when it was shattered by an earthquake in the year sixty-three of the Christian Era, and when it was in the throes of extinction sixteen years later, did it play a prominent rôle. While, however, the proud palaces of the Emperors lie crumbled in the dust, the homes of humble citizens in the little garden city have been preserved by the shower of ashes and the stream of lava that emanated from Vesuvius at the time of the great eruption and overwhelmed both Herculaneum and Pompeii. The rooms in the houses, indeed, remain vacant, but the gardens have taken on a new lease of life, thanks to Professor Spano, and, furnished with fountains, statuary, and flowers, retain a semblance of their pristine charm.

For centuries Herculaneum and Pompeii lay smothered under masses of lava and ashes. Finally, in 1748, skilful archæologists began to remove this heavy mantle and discovered a wealth of artistic treasures buried in the buildings and gardens. These works of art are now scattered in various museums all over the world, but many of the finest objects have



## POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

been claimed by the National Museum at Naples. Here we can study a superb collection of bronze and marble statuary, wall-paintings, mosaics, furniture and household utensils. Even the humblest articles often show the hand of a skilled designer.

The *Porta Marina*, at Pompeii, is the usual entrance to the ancient walled town of *Colonia Veneria Cornelia Pompeianorum* flourishing under the protection of joyous Venus in her chariot drawn by four playful elephants instead of by her customary doves. From this gate the *Via Marina* soon leads to the main square or *Forum*. This was the chief centre for the activities of the twenty thousand inhabitants of the city in the time of Christ. Outside the enclosing colonnades, that have now disappeared, still stand the ruins of temples, baths, courthouse and market-place. At the farther end rises a high stone platform supporting the broken columns of the Temple of Jupiter similar in its grandeur to the much better preserved *Maison Carré* at Nîmes.

Originally the town was laid out in oblong blocks of public buildings, shops and houses, probably by Etruscan engineers. Each section, or *regione*, is now numbered to simplify identification. The earliest domestic architecture, built of limestone quarried from the bed of the nearby river Sarno, was of Italic de-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

sign. A series of rooms formed a hollow square, opening into a rectangular court, or *atrium*, with a central aperture in the roof to admit light and to allow rain-water from the roof to drip from the sloping eaves into a tank below called the *impluvium*. Sometimes four columns supported the corners of the opening, but more often there were none. Since the court was usually rather small and dark it was paved with stone and afforded no opportunity for plants except in pots. Flower-borders were restricted to a yard at the back of the building.

The *Casa del Chirurgo* built before 200 B. C. is a notable example of this Italic type of residence. Another on a larger scale is the *Casa di Sallustio* built at about the same time, though of tufa instead of limestone and with a more complicated plan, covering a larger lot. From the atrium, with a characteristic rain-water tank sunk beneath the pavement, through a wide doorway extends a lovely view of a replanted garden, beyond a colonnade at the rear, containing couches adjoining a dining table, an altar, and a pool. The *Casa del Fauno*, a vast establishment occupying a whole block about three hundred by one hundred feet square, belongs to nearly the same period and includes, beyond the Tuscan atrium, two important enclosures formerly filled with shrubs

## POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

and flowers. There is a long vista from the large "picture window" behind the atrium through two spacious and sunny garden-courts. On the floor of the corridor connecting these open quadrangles lay the celebrated mosaic depicting the battle between Alexander and Darius.

The typical Pompeian residences of the most interesting description, with tufa replacing limestone walls, were owned by wealthy citizens and belonged to a later period, when both Greek and Egyptian influence had become apparent. In addition to the severely simple old-fashioned *atrium* of Tuscan derivation was a quadrilateral courtyard in the Grecian fashion, called a *peristylum*, often designedly crooked. This courtyard was surrounded by a colonnade, adjoining a series of small rooms, and in the open space was a gay parterre ornamented with flowers, statuary and fountains. A festive look was given by hanging garlands between the columns. Exquisitely designed bronze chairs and tripods furnished the portico, paintings decorated its walls and elaborate mosaics formed the pavement. Everything was small in scale to enhance the apparent size of the peristyle. Formal visitors were received in the outside atrium; within the more retired peristyle was the intimate centre of family life. Here a group of

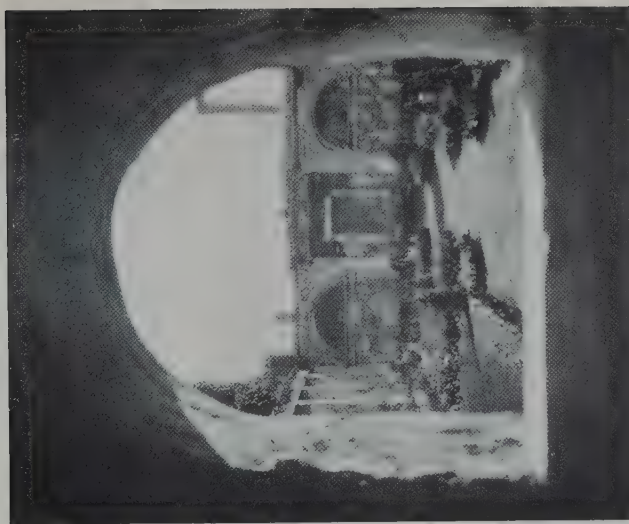
## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

friends could sit in the open air, shaded by awnings when the sun was hot, and children could play with their pets and toys while the birds were singing and the bees were gathering honey from the many-coloured flowers.

Sometimes there was also a larger walled enclosure behind the house containing pools for fish, canals in the Egyptian style, water-stairways, pavilions and provision for dining in the open air on couches under vine-covered pergolas. Here there was space for a number of trees planted in quincunxes, besides shrubs and plants. Part of the plot was sometimes devoted to an orchard or to vegetable beds. Many of these gardens have been restored by Professor Spano and are delightful even in winter-time. In the spring naturally the flowers are at their best with purple irises, starry white narcissi, lavender cyclamens, violets and fragrant pink roses in full bloom, beside a host of early annuals such as brightly tinted cornflowers, stocks and verbenas. A favorite shrub, represented in many of the Pompeian frescoes, was the oleander admired for its glossy evergreen foliage, and for its effective masses of summer-blooming flowers. Another plant, especially singled out for its decorative leaves, is the acanthus. Several frescoes show ivy trained to form balls or cones, and yews clipped into

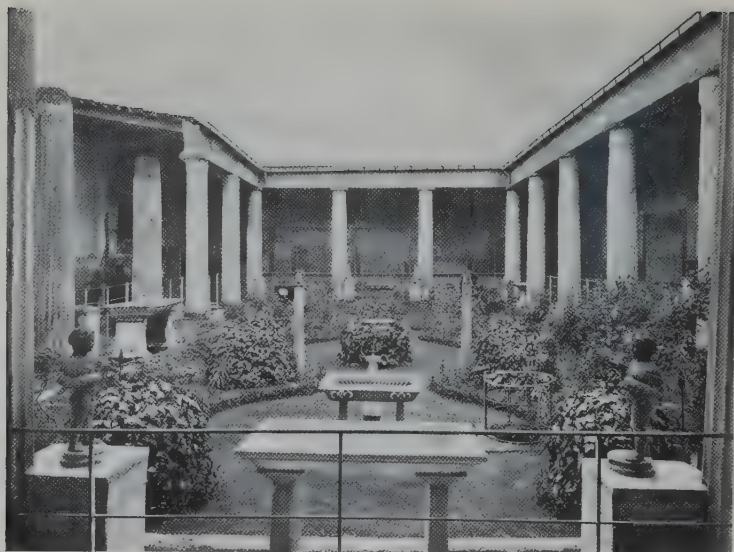


PERGOLA, CASA DI SALLUSTIO



GARDEN-COURT, CASA DELL' ANCORA





PERISTYLE, CASA DEI VETTII



RHODIAN PERISTYLE, CASA DEGLI AMORINI DORATI



## POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

various shapes. In the recently restored gardens these features are copied literally. The environment of these open-air living-rooms suggests the mediæval cloister-garth, and the character of the details has much in common with features associated with the pleasure-grounds of the Italian Renaissance. The same ideas were expressed in similar form over and over again, though differing in scale, and certain irregularities were deliberately adopted to enhance the design.

Many of the most charming gardens are in the Sixth Region. It is difficult to decide whether to plan to visit them in the order of their age, their beauty, or their proximity. The oldest residences do not contain the most interesting gardens, nor are those of the same period all in the same group.

On the northeastern corner of the *Strada di Nola* and the *Strada di Mercurio* is a fascinating little dwelling, celebrated by Bulwer-Lytton in "The Last Days of Pompeii," as the home of Glaucus, and known as the *Casa del Poeta Tragico*. Although probably designed much later and rebuilt after the earthquake of 63 A. D., its general plan retains all the essential features of the pre-Roman period, and on such a small scale that it is easy to grasp their significance. At the front door is the celebrated mosaic

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of a barking dog inscribed with the warning *Cave Canem*. The atrium contains a large central basin intended for rain-water, and a paved floor. In the small space assigned to the peristyle the colonnade is limited to three sides of the enclosure and there is room for only a few shrubs.

Next door, the *Casa di Pansa* is interesting because it is one of the few houses with an enclosure at the rear large enough for the cultivation of fruit-trees and vegetables. There is a vista through the centre of the atrium extending across the peristyle and dining-room to this charming plantation of oranges and lemons. A long colonnade extending the entire length of the building, as in the *Casa di Loreio Tiburtino*, makes a pleasant place to walk or sit under the shadow of a grape-vine while looking at the garden.

In this same vicinity on the *Strada di Mercurio* the *Casa dell' Ancora* contains a small and unique garden that might easily be overlooked as it does not show from the street and the entrance there is locked. Hidden in an out-of-the-way spot below the house it is enclosed by a stone portico, with massive square posts and archways between them forming a series of niches that contain pedestals for statues or vases. Above stands a colonnade in ruinous condition. The

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parterre, edged by a stone curb, is further defined by a paved path. A narrow border of trained ivy frames the beds and, even in January flowers are blooming there;—dark blue German iris, purple violets, and a few pink roses. Masses of rose-bushes fill the centres of the two long beds, accented by cones overgrown with ivy, that flank the central pathway leading to a miniature stone pavilion posted between two semicircular niches incrustated with mosaics, at the further end of the enclosure. The whole effect is very attractive and might well be reproduced in one of our modern back-yards.

Ornamental niches for miniature cascades in the houses of the *Fontana Grande* and of the *Fontana Piccola*, on the opposite side of the same street, can be seen, in passing, on the way to the *Casa di Castore e Polluce*. Here a stately peristyle with Doric columns lies between two atriums. Beyond one of them is a garden, shaded by tall shrubs and clipped yew, containing a large aquarium. A water-stairway is the chief out-door feature at the neighbouring *Casa di Meleagro*. Finally, next the ancient city wall, in the *Casa di Apollo*, an unusual garden at the rear has a circular fountain in the centre, a raised walk around the outside, and in one corner a little casino faced with a mosaic decoration. A second enclosure

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is filled by a curious water castle, reproducing on a small scale a complicated monumental fountain, that may have been visited by the owner when travelling abroad. The large pool, surrounded by the bases of columns, contains an octagonal construction upon a central platform with miniature stairways. Small curved flights of steps constructed inside the outer wall produced the effect of cascades when there was a flow of water.

On the north side of the *Vicolo di Mercurio* three interesting residences contain distinctive gardens. The first one covers the ground of a very large square peristyle and is patterned in dwarfed boxwood according to the design of a mosaic labyrinth in an alcove which suggested the name *Casa del Labirinto*. The proportions of the tall columns around the peristyle are especially impressive. A palm growing above a square bed of lavender-blue iris marks the centre, and thin pieces of slate, laid to form bands of miniature labyrinths, frame the parterre.

A delightful house with an ever open door is the *Casa dei Vettii*. It contains an exceptionally fine series of wall-paintings and the most complete garden-court, in Pompeii, finished not long before the final destruction of the town. Beyond a small and rather dark atrium lies a sunny oblong peristyle surrounded



WATER STAIRWAY, CASA DI MARCO LUCREZIO



LABYRINTH, CASA DEL LABERINTO





PERISTYLE, CASA DELLE NOZZE D'ARGENTO



ATRIUM, CASA DELLE NOZZE D'ARGENTO



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by a portico with white columns leaving ample floor-space under the cover of the projecting roof for walking or sitting. Inside the colonnade stretches a garden laid out on a miniature scale, gay with flowers and birds and butterflies, charmingly ornamented with small statues and fountain basins, looking almost exactly the same as it did two thousand years ago. The outlines of the flower-beds are edged with a low foliage plant and remain unaltered, the little bronze boys stand in their original positions and metal pipes still lie ready to supply an abundance of water. Cones of ivy, copied from those painted on the neighbouring walls of the peristyle, and clipped yews are planted amidst a profusion of flowers, including only those varieties cultivated in this locality by the ancients. Among them are the decorative leaves of the acanthus, graceful papyri, grown in tubs of water, roses, violets, pansies, daisies, and stocks. The imagination need not be taxed to supply any missing features; there is indeed an almost too great wealth of detail.

The *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, the third of this group, is distinguished by having a charming Rhodian peristyle, characterized by the columns on one side of the colonnade being higher than the rest. Between these fluted pillars hang carved marble disks

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

and masks of festive appearance. The parterre, with a central pool set in an ivy-bed, is ornamented by slender marble posts supporting small busts and bas-reliefs.

One of the oldest houses of the normal type was excavated, at the end of the *Vico di Mercurio*, in honour of the silver wedding anniversary of Queen Margherita and King Umberto, and is known as the *Casa delle Nozze d'Argento*. In the irregular Rhodian peristyle the trees used as accents in the beds correspond to the five spots of a *quincunx*, a favorite pattern. There is a charming glimpse of this garden through a wide doorway, from the magnificent atrium with Corinthian columns, nearly twenty-three feet high, standing at the corners of the impluvium. Outside the peristyle was a large plantation furnished with a table and couches for open-air banqueting.

On account of its luxuriant masses of oleanders the *Casa del Centenario* deserves passing mention. Two charming little statuettes were found here; a bronze satyr in the peristyle and a marble Silenus in front of the water-stairway in the garden.

The newly excavated end of the *Via dell' Abondanza* (an important artery running between several different regions, where the *Scavi Nuovi* are set

## POMPEIAN PERISTYLES

apart by a barrier), with its overhanging balconies and walls covered with racy inscriptions, has been wonderfully restored to life. Opening on the street are shops with a tempting display of merchandise, and behind them are several houses with large gardens ornamented by exceptional architectural features. As the flowers increase in number, while trees and vines cast deeper shadows, the whole effect will become still more delightful.

On the northern side of the street, not far beyond the barrier, in the *Casa di Trebio Valerio*, the polychrome peristyle, entered from the atrium, contains a delightful garden. Sky blue columns stand out against walls chequered with squares of chrome-yellow and contrast pleasantly with a green parterre planted with box and ivy. In the centre, at the rear of the court, a little pavilion faces a semicircular pool intended to receive miniature spouts of water arising from around the coping.

From the garden-architect's point of view the large residence of *Loreius Tiburtinus* is most interesting. A long terrace, covered by a pergola, extends the length of the house and down the centre is embedded a narrow cement channel with the inside painted blue. Each side of this little water-way is ornamented at intervals by small pieces of statuary.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Two dining-couches are set in front of a recessed wall-fountain at one end, corresponding to a fountain niche, flanked by wall-paintings at the opposite end. In the centre rises a charming little pavilion guarded by a statue of one of the Muses. Below the terrace lies a large garden traversed by another miniature canal, its straight lines broken by the slender posts of a pergola and a more solidly constructed *baldachino* covering jets of water. Roots of fruit-trees, found in the ground, show that it was partly devoted to an orchard.

In the *Casa dell' Efebo in Bronzo*, named from the remarkable bronze statue found there, a portico opens into a walled garden where the place of honour is given to an exquisitely painted summer triclinium decorated with Egyptian scenery. The couches centre on a fountain connected by an open channel with a little gabled edifice against the wall, where water could ripple down a few steps into a sunken pool. In the painted niche at the back of this *tempietto* stood one of the loveliest of fountain-figures—a bronze Venus hardly a foot high. Columns at each corner of the triclinium upheld vine-covered rafters to protect the guests from the sun. At night the gilded statue of Efebo carried a number of lamps to throw light upon the scene. There

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was no pleasanter place in Pompeii for a banquet.

In several of the other dwellings, excavated recently, there are the sites of gardens and many interesting architectural features. Mosaic pavements, wall paintings, pavilions and fountains of excellent design have been found there.

Outside the walls of Pompeii there was room for larger estates than within the town and Pliny, writing of the black day of death and destruction, points out that the villas stood "extremely thick upon that beautiful coast." Unluckily the one ascribed to Cicero not far beyond the *Porta Ercolanese*, above the picturesque street of the Tombs with its curved exedras and mournful plumes of cypress, still remains mostly underground. Next door, similar in plan and also on a large scale, stands the *Villa di Diomede*. At the rear of the house is an exceptionally large garden enclosed by a colonnade with little pavilions at each corner. The inside ground was planted with trees. In the centre lies a fish-pond, and back of it the raised floor of an arbour with six columns, where feasts could be given under the shade of the vines.

A study of the evolution of the different architectural features connected with the Pompeian gardens might fill an entire book. It is interesting to compare

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the simple unornamented Etruscan columns with the later examples of the Greek and Roman types with fluted pillars and ornate capitals like those in the *Casa di Meleagro*. As the use of water grew more varied, the fountain basins became larger and more elaborate, with occasionally a veneer of mosaic. Niches for fountains and water-stairways like those in the *Casa della Fontana Grande*, of the *Piccola Fontana*, of the *Orso*, of the *Centenario* and of *Marcus Lucretius* were not uncommon.

Frescoes and mosaics also passed through stages embodying, successively, certain marked characteristics. Painted decorations added greatly to the beauty of the courtyard walls. The first or incrustation style, fashionable in Pompeii during the second century before Christ, was of extreme simplicity. A frieze next the ceiling and a dado above the floor left a central space where oblongs of raised stucco were frescoed to simulate blocks of different coloured marble—black, yellow, red, or bluish green. The Second, or Architectural Style, developed with various elaborations during the following century. The walls continued to be divided into three sections but the architectural features became more pronounced and the central panels were framed by columns sup-



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porting the roofs of pavilions or pergolas. During the reign of Augustus, the Ornate Style with its dull colouring and fanciful architecture grew popular. On the central part of the wall panels containing scenes with figures, often of Egyptian origin, alternated with spaces almost devoid of decoration. In the final period, beginning about the middle of the first century A. D., the Intricate Style showed greater respect for architectural realities and a preference for more vivid and sharply contrasting colours. Pictures ornamented the large panels while flying figures and statuary played their part amidst airy structures that are so intricately involved in places as to be almost incomprehensible. In almost every peristyle the walls will be found ornamented with these paintings.

On the walls of the outside gardens a more realistic style of painting was adopted, simulations of growing plants and shrubs being combined with fountains and lattice-work to disguise the boundaries. One of the finest examples, in the *Villa Livia* at Prima Porta seven miles north of Rome, depicts an open-work parapet in front of a plantation of orange-trees, oleanders and flowers; the perspective so contrived as to give an impression of depth. Pompeian

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frescoes of this kind can be seen in the *Casa di Zeffri e Glori*, the *Casa dell' Orso*, in the *Scavi Nuovi* and elsewhere.

Mosaics not only enlivened the pavements but were used to decorate the walls and to encrust the surface of fountain basins and columns. At first rather coarse in texture and dull in colour they were developed in finer materials and became varied in hue. There is a beautiful pavement in the dining-room opening on the terrace at the *Casa dell' Efebo in Bronzo* that is the finest example of opus sectile in Pompeii. The cauliflower pattern of the design and its rich coloring of blue and yellow marble is relieved against a background of coloured segments of vitrified paste producing a similar effect to that of a fine old Persian carpet. Purely decorative effects of this kind are in better taste than elaborate mosaic pictures like the celebrated one of the battle of Alexander now in the Naples Museum. The technique of the mosaics varies greatly and the designs are legion.

In the *Casa delle Colonne in Mosaico*, outside the *Porta Ercolanese*, mosaic columns at the four corners of a rectangular pool once upheld vine-covered rafters, such as have been restored in the *Casa del Centenario*. A like pergola was described by Pliny.



TERRACE, CASA DI TREBIO VALENTIO



GARDEN, VILLA DI DIOMEDE



ATRIUM, CASA DI LUCREZIO FRONTONE

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Ornaments of bronze and marble were considered of vital importance to the beauty of the garden. Pliny the Younger writes regarding Tullus: "It is expected his curiosities will soon be sold at auction. He had such an abundant collection of very old statues that he actually filled an extensive garden with them the very day he purchased it, not to mention the numberless other antiques lying neglected in his granaries." This shows that not only were gardens furnished with statuary but that antiques were of especial value. Greek masterpieces and copies of the work of Greek sculptors were often placed in the peristyle. The charming little archaistic statue of Diana, with traces of colour still ornamenting her flowing garments, was found in a Pompeian residence and is now one of the most important acquisitions to the Naples Museum. Several charming bronze statues have been recovered, including the little Dionysus excavated long ago and the life-sized Efebus which created such excitement when it was recently disinterred in the *Nuovi Scavi*. Slender columns or posts, surmounted by single or double heads below which could be hung garlands, were very common. These hermes derived their origin from the stones, used as boundary marks, regarded as sacred because



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they had been struck by lightning sent by Jupiter. To describe all the different kinds of basins and fountains would be impossible. Every garden contained a number.

Garden furniture was also beautifully designed. Marble tables, either oblong or round, had carved supports. Quadrilateral examples still remain in the house of Cornelius Rufus and of the Fullonica while circular ones are not uncommon. There were also chairs and graceful three-legged tables of bronze light enough to be moved easily from the portico to the garden. Some of the out-door tricliniums were charmingly decorated with frescoes, none better than the one already described in the *Casa dell' Efebo*.

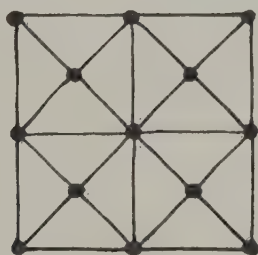
Of the ancient villas of the Romans in other parts of Italy all that remains today is chiefly of interest to archæologists or collected within the walls of museums. They can best be imagined by reading the writings of Pliny the Younger and M. Terentius Varro. Pliny's favourite villa was in Tuscany with a widespread view towards the distant Apennines. There were a succession of gardens and terraces planted with pines, laurels, and plane-trees besides evergreens clipped into various shapes. A bewilder-



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ing number of pavilions, fountains, and statues defy description.

Hadrian's magnificent country-seat near Tivoli covered an estate on the Campagna seven miles in circumference. His many-coloured marble theatres, temples, and porticos lie in almost indistinguishable ruins today and of his groves and gardens there remain no traces. Many of the statues, however, were dug up at a later date, among them portraits of his young friend Antinous that are among the finest achievements of Roman art. Even the poor remains of this villa, discovered at the time of the Renaissance, served to inspire some of the great architects at that time.



QUINCUNX

## CHAPTER II

### THE CLOISTER GARTH

IN the dark ages, following upon the Barbarian invasion of Italy and the spread of Christianity, both serving to hasten the downfall of the Roman Empire, arose an international organization, modelled upon similar lines, that helped to fill the gap. This institution was the Roman branch of the Christian Church. And, seemingly at its last gasp, expiring civilization was kept alive chiefly through the ministrations of Christ's followers within the early monastic strongholds.

At this time, the cloister played very much the same part in the existence of a religious order, as had the peristyle in the life of a Roman family. It was a cheery enclosure, placed south of the church that it might not be too much overshadowed, where the monks met for recreation and for intercourse with each other and the outside world. Here breathing the fresh air and enjoying the sunshine, they could pace around the corridor or sit on stone benches beside the columns. Slender cypresses perhaps marked



CLOISTER, MONASTERY OF S. SCHOLASTICA, SUBIACO



CLOISTER, SAN PAOLO FUORI-LE-MURA, ROME



CLOISTER, SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI, ROME

## THE CLOISTER GARTH

the centre of each quarter of the ground-space, carpeted with flowers and edged with box or some fragrant herb. In the middle of this so-called *paradiso* at the intersection of the two main paths, encircled by cypresses was usually a well-head or a very simple stone cistern used for ablutions symbolizing to the monks the purification of the soul from sin. The resemblance between the mediæval cloisters and the Greek peristyle is very striking, and, in both, curious effects are introduced by craftily breaking away from strict symmetry. Differences characterize the disposition of the colonnade; in the peristyle the columns stand on the ground, and in the cloisters they usually rest on a parapet. As in the peristyle, the outer walls of the cloister, back of the columns, were covered with paintings although of very dissimilar subjects. Scenes suggested by descriptions in the Old and New Testaments, or episodes in the lives of the saints were chosen as affording religious inspiration to the monks, who would have turned away their eyes in horror from the flippant representations that amused the pleasure-loving Pompeians.

As an architectural setting to a garden cloistered arcades are incomparable. Seen from outside, the columns and arches charmingly frame the floral picture, while, from within the enclosure, a colonnade, de-



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

tached against dark outer walls, makes a perfect background for the trees and flowers. It is chiefly from an architectural standpoint that we must study the evolution of the cloister-garth; although, sometimes, the design of the enclosed ground is also of interest.

Saint Benedict, the son of a noble family living at Nursia, a small Umbrian town near Spoleto, was the founder of Western monasticism. Shocked by the decadence of the Church and of all classes of society in Rome at the beginning of the sixth century, when a young man he withdrew from the world and isolated himself in a cave, not far from Nero's villa at Subiaco. There, after much fasting and prayer, he decided to devote the remainder of his life to the organization of what he called "schools for the worship of God."

According to the rules that Benedict drew up for his disciples, he did not favour a purely contemplative life, or advocate the ascetic practices that preoccupied the Eastern monks and hermits, who had previously established their cults in many parts of Italy. On the contrary, he encouraged all kinds of useful work, and the pursuit of learning, as well as devotion to prayer. Within the Benedictine monasteries the brethren were supposed to produce almost all the



## THE CLOISTER GARTH

necessities that they required. Consequently, the proficiency shown by the Black Monks of the Benedictine Order in agriculture and horticulture soon became a valuable object-lesson to their neighbours. Flowers, scorned by contemporary Christians because customarily used to adorn Pagan festivals, were now grown to deck the altars in monastic churches and to glorify the worship of the one God. Among those considered particularly appropriate for this purpose were the rose, the lily and the iris.

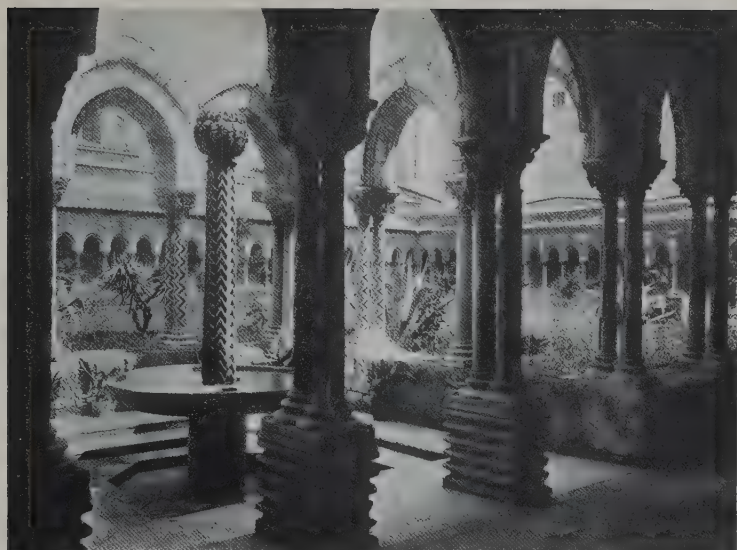
While at Subiaco, Benedict's fame spread rapidly and during the few years of his stay he founded twelve monasteries there. Of these only one remains today. It was named *Santa Scholastica* for Benedict's beloved sister and became a great territorial power in the twelfth century, when the Abbot, ruling over hundreds of castles, churches and manors, used to fight against his neighbours, the rapacious Orsinis and Colonnas. He was not infrequently seen clad in armor and carrying a sword. Usually, like Benedict of noble birth, his successors might well rank as princes of the Church. Included in this monastery are three different cloisters that have been more or less transformed from time to time. The oldest was rebuilt in the tenth century and contains a tangle of flowers; the third and the most interesting one re-

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sembling those of *San Giovanni Laterano* and of *San Paolo fuori-le-Mura* near Rome, was redecorated with inlaid marble and mosaics by three of the celebrated Cosmati family towards the middle of the thirteenth century, when their style of work flowered to great perfection. Although this cloister is unplanted, no more charming architectural setting for flower-beds is imaginable.

Above *Santa Scholastica*, near the cave (*Sacro Speco*) where Benedict lived as a hermit, his disciples, after his death, built the Monastery of Saint Benedict. Close by was a thicket of brambles where he used to mortify his body with thorns to overcome the temptations of the flesh and to drive away the Devil masquerading in the form of a beautiful woman. When Saint Francis came from Assisi to visit the Monastery, in 1223, he grafted these briars with roses, that were marked with red spots, suggesting drops of blood. This *Roseto*, like the little garden of Saint Francis at Assisi with its miraculously thornless rose-bushes, is still in existence.

From Subiaco, led by ravens, accompanied by two angels, (if we may believe Saint Gregory), and by a pair of favourite disciples, Saint Benedict found his way through wild ravines to Cassino, half way between Rome and Naples. On top of a steep mountain



CLOISTER, BENEDICTINE MONASTERY, MONREALE



CLOISTER, S. GIOVANNI DEGLI EREMITI, PALERMO



CHIOSTRO DEL PARADISO, DUOMO, AMALFI



CLOISTER, S. FRANCESCO, RAVENNA



## THE CLOISTER GARTH

high above the town he instituted the great monastery that is chiefly associated with his name. The picturesque episodes in his life, illustrated by Sodoma, can be seen on the frescoed walls of the cloisters at *Monte Oliveto* near Siena.

Begun in 529 the monastery of *Monte Cassino* stood for centuries as a lighthouse illuminating, with far-reaching rays, all western Europe and became the most important centre of religious and intellectual culture. Pillaged by Lombards and Saracens and turned into a fortress in the twelfth century, the destruction of the monastery was completed by an earthquake in 1349. Rising from the ashes at a later date, and done over with the help of Bramante in the Renaissance style, nothing remains today of the old buildings and there are no gardens in the cloisters.

From an elaborate drawing, outlining an ideal monastic establishment, made about 825 and preserved in the library of the Benedictine Monastery of *Saint Gall* in Switzerland, we can get an idea of the way the early monastic gardens were laid out. This plan shows several enclosures where trees and plants were cultivated for useful and ornamental purposes. Adjoining a building, where the gardeners lived and their tools were stored, is a Kitchen Garden laid out with two rows of oblong beds filled with eighteen

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kinds of vegetables. The Physic Garden, devoted to herbs intended for medicinal use, is similar in design though on a much smaller scale. In the Cemetery, where the monks reposed after death, were planted a variety of deciduous trees, bearing either fruit or nuts, and also a few evergreen laurels. The effect of these plantations must have been pleasing, although their purpose was primarily utilitarian. Probably the only purely decorative planting, combined with architectural features, was supposed to be in the square cloister-garth next the church. It is divided by paths into quarters, in the centre is a well, and on the outside is the usual covered walk screened by a colonnade.

In the sixth century the Benedictines from *Monte Cassino* founded a monastery in connection with the basilica of *San Giovanni Laterano*, built by the Emperor Constantine and known as the "mother of all churches." Entered from the aisle on the south side is a charming Romanesque cloister, constructed by Vassallettus from 1220-1230, showing the way that in the thirteenth century classic architectural forms underwent interesting modifications. The art of inlaying marble with colored stones and gold, usually known as Cosmati work, is brilliantly exemplified here. The spiral columns spaced in pairs around



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the cloisters are incrustated with these mosaics, red and gold being the predominating colours. No two columns are exactly alike and yet the general effect is perfectly harmonious. The *paradiso* is divided into quarters by gravel paths and there is also an outside walk next the colonnade. Four large grass-plots are edged with box and accented by palms. In the centre, raised two steps above the level of the ground, stands a stone well-head, carved with a Byzantine design early in the tenth century, probably brought from Constantinople.

Not far away adjacent to the church of *S.S. Quattro Coronati*, is one of the best examples of an early twelfth century type of cloister where the mosaic-work is only beginning to form part of the decoration. The cloister of *San Lorenzo fuori*, also in the primitive Romanesque style, is well-planted and contains a fountain of the same period. Round arches, curiously divergent in height and width, furnish a strikingly simple arcade.

At *San Paolo fuori-le-Mura* there is another thirteenth century cloister exquisitely incrustated with Cosmati work. As, however, the construction was not carried on continuously by the same designer the details lack somewhat in unity and the spiral shafts on three sides are placed only at the entrances to the

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garth. In the centre is a round pool. The four large flower-beds are edged with iris and other flowers and accented by palms.

The beautiful cloister at the Benedictine Monastery of *Monreale* above Palermo has no equal in Byzantine architecture. Built by a Norman King of Sicily, William the Good, in connection with the splendid cathedral he founded in 1176, it, also, shows Saracen influence. Beside this large courtyard, a hundred and forty feet square, enclosed by a colonnade with pointed arches supported on marble columns, similar cloisters at *Santa Scholastica*, *San Paolo fuori-le-Mura* and *San Giovanni Laterano* sink into insignificance. Pairs of spiral columns inlaid with a mosaic of coloured stone and sparkling gold, alternating with a couple of plain shafts, show at its best the exquisite work made famous by the Cosmati family. Almost no two of the elaborately carved capitals are alike. In one corner a stone pavilion covers a large basin for ablutions surmounted by a column ending in a ball that was perforated to release spouts of water. The enclosed square, filled with flowering plants, orange-trees and palms, completes an altogether charming picture.

Saracen influence often modified Norman architecture in Sicily and southern Italy, during the first



FAIENCE BENCH, CLOISTER, S. CHIARA, NAPLES



PERGOLA, CLOISTER, S. CHIARA, NAPLES



CELL AND GARDEN, CERTOSA DI PAVIA

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century of Norman rule. After the downfall of the Roman Empire, this section of the country had been for two hundred years under the tolerant rule of the Saracens. They had not attempted to interfere with the religious practices of the Orthodox Greeks, the Italians and Lombards belonging to the Roman Catholic church, or the Jews. When the Norman counts established a kingdom there, in the twelfth century, they imitated this tolerance in many ways. The churches and monasteries they endowed showed Saracen as well as Norman traditions. At Amalfi the *Chiostro del Paradiso*, connected with the Cathedral, goes back to the tenth century and the interlaced Saracen arches do not appear to have been altered when the church was refashioned by the Normans, two centuries after its erection, early in the twelfth century. There is a similar interlacing above the portal of the Cathedral at Cefalù, founded by King Roger in the twelfth century. Connected with this last building is a very interesting cloister showing an intermingling of the Norman and Saracen styles. The little church of *San Giovanni degli Eremiti* at Palermo has a curiously oriental exterior, with domes and latticed windows of perforated marble that suggest a Mohammedan mosque. Saracen influence is also marked in the pointed arches of the cloister,



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where there is a tangle of flowers that seem to have been allowed to run wild.

A unique and almost unknown cloister adjoins the church of *Santa Chiara* in Naples. It was built in the fourteenth century by the Angevin king, Robert the Wise, and his Spanish wife Sancia of Majorca, friends of Boccaccio and Petrarch. The style shows the transition between Romanesque and French Gothic, some of the arches being round and others pointed. In the garth there is a pleasing combination of flowers and vegetables. Very curious is the majolica work added by Domenico Antonio Vacaro in the eighteenth century. Posts of pergolas over cross-paths, bases of fountains accenting each quarter, and central benches are covered with brilliant paintings on majolica.

For five hundred years the Benedictine Order had no rivals; then, at the close of the eleventh century, the Cistercian Order was founded in France and with the help of Saint Bernard became of vast importance. The most interesting of the many monasteries once belonging to this order, which introduced the French Gothic style, is at *Fossanova* on the *Via Appia* about seventy miles southeast of Rome. It was probably founded during the lifetime of Saint Benedict by a group of monks from Monte Cassino, but,



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being deserted and having fallen into disrepair, Pope Innocent II gave it to Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century when the Cistercians had become more powerful than the Benedictines. There is a very interesting little pavilion in the centre of one side of the cloister containing a basin of running water for ablutions, and projecting into the garden. A similar monastery at *Casamari* has a small cloister about sixty-five feet square betraying French Gothic influence. In the center rises a good stone cistern. *San Martino al Cimino* near Viterbo is another monastery of Benedictine origin that was transformed by the Cistercians.

Among the off-shoots of the Benedictines were the Camaldolese, the Carthusians, the Sylvestrians and the Vallombrosians, all founded in the eleventh century and having many well-known monasteries in Italy. The first monastery erected by Saint Romuald near Arezzo was called *Camaldoli* and all the subsequent ones go by the same name. As the mother-house has been suppressed and turned into a hotel it is no longer especially interesting. Each monk had his own little cottage and garden partly forming a hamlet in the neighbourhood of the church.

The Carthusians, founded by Saint Bruno at Grenoble, live according to their rule, not only apart

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from the world but apart from each other. Each monk has a separate dwelling with five small rooms and a tiny garden, where the flowers intermingled with herbs are cherished by loving hands.

At the *Certosa di Pavia* near Milan stands the most celebrated Carthusian monastery in Italy. No longer occupied by the monks it is preserved by the government as a public monument. Founded by Gian Galeazzo Visconti at the close of the fourteenth century the buildings belong to the Renaissance period. Adjoining the south side of the church is the charming *Chiostro della Fontana*, with slender marble columns and terra-cotta decorations ornamenting the enclosing arcade. In the centre of the well-planted parterre is a charming marble fountain, with the figure of a boy above a basin supported by dolphins. Around the large cloister, which is also filled with shrubs and flowers, are the twenty-four dwellings formerly inhabited by the monks. Each had its small garden and one or two of them have been very well restored.

In the Dominican monastery of *Santa Maria delle Grazie* at Milan, begun in 1464, Lodovico il Moro employed Bramante to build a cloister in the style of the Early Renaissance. The planting there is good. The entrance is from the refectory, superbly deco-



SMALL CLOISTER, S. MARIA DELLE GRAZIE, MILAN



CLOISTER OF S. ANTONINO, SAN MARCO, FLORENCE



SMALL CLOISTER, CERTOSA DI PAVIA

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rated by Leonardo da Vinci with his celebrated fresco of the Last Supper. There is beside a small cloister that should not be overlooked. The Duke, to whom Leonardo also owed his commission, often came to watch the progress of the work and to talk to the friendly monks.

In his wonderfully comprehensive "Lombard Architecture" Kingsley Porter mentions the lovely thirteenth century cloister at Piona on Lake Como. Wildly overgrown, this enchanted spot with one of the most perfect settings in Europe, seldom attracts the tourist's attention. Other interesting northern cloisters mentioned by Mr. Porter are at Vezzolano in the Monferrato and connected with the church of San Zeno in Verona where he believes that the Lombard cloister has reached its most perfect development.

Near Galuzzo and within easy reach of Florence another Carthusian Monastery, the *Certosa di Val d'Ema*, crowns a picturesque hill-top. The monks are still living there or lying buried among the fruit-trees in a balustraded section of the large garden devoted to vegetables and herbs, in a cloister-garth surrounded by the monks' apartments. Visitors are shown one of the little gardens here, that might have been laid out when the monastery was built in the



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middle of the fourteenth century. The raised beds and borders are filled with primroses, narcissi and other spring flowers. Oleander bushes furnish them with a background.

Well worth while is the ascent high above Naples to the *Certosa di San Martino*. It contains an interesting cloister-garden with a marble colonnade. The plan is along the usual lines, but was carried out so late in the Renaissance that the rich ornamentation shows Baroque influence. At present the monastery is used as a museum of decorative art.

The great cloister on the Quirinal Hill, designed by Michelangelo for a Carthusian community, is considered the finest Renaissance courtyard constructed in Rome. It now forms part of the *Museo delle Terme*. Fortunately the plan of the garden remains unchanged for the worse, and the planting is good. The marble heads of colossal horses and oxen strengthen a central circle of cypresses. Michelangelo himself is said to have set out one of them, an ancient specimen easily counting five hundred years.

In contrast to the rich and powerful monks were the humble friars whose first leaders were Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Dominic. Saint Francis renounced every form of luxury and found happiness in helping the poor and in preaching a gospel of love



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and peace. He considered cheerfulness an obligation and rebuked one of his brethren for having a gloomy countenance while being employed in the service of God. His fondness for flowers was shown in many ways as was his tenderness towards all living creatures. On this account the record of his sayings compiled by his followers was entitled "Little Flowers of Saint Francis." Below Assisi adjoining the church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli*, so ostentatiously covering the simple little chapel in which the Saint died, is the garden filled with his thornless roses and the hovel where he used to live. The chief incidents in his career can be seen as depicted by Giotto in the upper part of the church connected with the imposing Franciscan Monastery dominating Assisi. Here is a charming cloister. A delight in nature and a fondness for flowers, that became widespread in the lifetime of Saint Francis, owed much of its inspiration to his teaching. Homage should be paid to him by all garden-lovers.

Contemporary with Saint Francis was Saint Dominic the founder of the Dominican Order of Friars. Two more different men could hardly be imagined. Dominic was a Spaniard of the distinguished Guzman family. He developed a passion for reclaiming heretics and played a part in the war against the

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Albigensians in Languedoc, that led to his being called the precursor of the Inquisition. However, his defenders state that actually he put down heresy "with no other arms than those of prayer, patience and instruction." Certainly no spiritual advice could have been more beautiful than his last words to his followers as he lay on the floor dying: "Have charity, guard humility, and make your treasure out of voluntary poverty."

The most celebrated Dominican monastery, now known as the *Museo di San Marco*, is in Florence. It might be classed with several others there that are variations of the same type. Originally belonging to the Sylvestrians, a small branch of the Benedictine Order, the buildings were turned over to the Dominicans who were high in the favour of the early Medici rulers. Cosimo "Pater Patriæ," towards the middle of the fifteenth century, employed his favorite architect Michelozzo Michelozzi to reconstruct the monastery. To him we owe the *Chiostro di San Antonino* named for the first abbot, a holy man, often visited by Cosimo. In the first cloister Fra Angelico, a member of the community, decorated the walls with frescoes. Perhaps the most beautiful one represents Christ as a pilgrim being welcomed by two Dominican monks. The enclosing columns, sup-

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porting unusually wide arches, stand upon separate pedestals instead of upon the customary parapet of an earlier period. A large cedar of Lebanon emphasizes the centre of the parterre which is divided by straight walks into quarters. Here, under a damask rose-tree, the great reformer Savonarola used to plead with the Florentines until the cloisters were no longer large enough to hold his listeners.

Following in his grandfather's footsteps Lorenzo the Magnificent continued to make gifts to St. Mark's and went there to hear mass. But he wished in vain to be on friendly terms with Savonarola. In 1491, when elected Prior of the monastery, the monk refused to pay his respects to its princely patron according to the usual custom. Upon another occasion when the friar was informed that Lorenzo was walking in the convent garden he declined to join him. This discourteous behaviour did not prevent the ruler, when dying, from sending to ask Savonarola to come to Careggi to hear his last confession and give him absolution.

Among the friends and admirers of Savonarola were the artists Michelangelo, Sandro Botticelli and Lorenzo de Credi. Several of the friars living in the convent and devoted to the Prior were also painters and sculptors, among them Fra Angelico,

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Fra Bartolomeo della Porta and two of the Della Robbia family.

Towards the close of the reformer's life, when his scathing attacks upon ecclesiastical and civic corruption, had aroused the anger of Pope Alexander VI and of many Florentine politicians, the convent was attacked and the friars fought against the invaders throughout the cloisters. A few weeks later in May, 1498, Savonarola and two other Dominican friars were forced to undergo an ordeal by fire, in the Piazza under the shadow of the *Palazzo Vecchio*, and were burnt to death.



### CHAPTER III

#### FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE RENAISSANCE

IN the Middle Ages, beginning with the sixth century, every large country residence was either a fortified monastery or a battlemented castle. Within the early donjons, towering blocks of masonry, or *rocche*, perched on inaccessible crags and protected by a strong enceinte, there was neither sufficient sunlight nor space for growing plants successfully; and, outside the moat, there was always danger from fighting bands of local enemies, wandering marauders, or a frequent succession of foreign invaders. Following the Vandals, with fire and sword, came Ostrogoths, Byzantines, Lombards and Franks to devastate the country and slaughter the inhabitants. Peace was nowhere. Little wonder that before the twelfth century there are no authentic records even hinting that the feudal lords enjoyed the luxury of having pleasure grounds.

A revival of learning and of the peaceful arts and crafts, sometimes called the Mediæval Renaissance, brightened the dawn of a less tumultuous era in the



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twelfth century. Romanesque architecture advanced and Gothic tendencies became evident. People began to take interest in the amenities of life, castles became more palatial, and once again there was opportunity for horticulture and agriculture. Courtyards took the place of the frowning donjons and afforded space for a few flower beds within the battlements, while outside the moat, and perhaps connected with the castle by a drawbridge, might be a walled orchard to serve as a more extensive pleasure. By the end of the thirteenth century, besides the people who lived in the country all the year round, many of the rich and noble town-dwellers used to spend the hot weather in *villeggiatura*.

Inside an especial enclosure, railed off from the more public part of the *cortile*, an inner court considered almost indispensable, was the *hortus inclusus* so often used as a symbol for religious seclusion by contemporary writers. Here it was the province of the châtelaine to design the raised beds for plants, the vine-covered arbours and the turfy seats. She chose the herbs and a sprinkling of vegetables and flowers, including rosemary, lavender, onions, carrots, pink roses and white lilies, to be cultivated chiefly for utilitarian purposes, and perhaps added a clipped shrub, boxwood or yew. The spire of a



**L**ar intention de  
bruler des her-  
bes de lair  
de leur racine  
de et de toutes les herbes qui  
sont semées pour nourrir  
nature de terre humain et  
autres a le d'air ensemble  
de celles qui viennent sans  
labourer ailleurs par leur  
nature: vers du soleil

selon l'ordre del a-b-c selon  
le latin et en d'air la vertu  
qui puet aider et mirer  
au corps. Car ce hault un  
certain a ceulx qui demen-  
ent aux champs en la  
deuxième saison pour l'air  
a muer les a l'air de fire  
et d'air fire.  
D'air d'air et d'air d'air  
d'air.

From the original in The Pierpont Morgan Library  
CHESS-BOARD GARDEN, FROM "DE AGRICULTURA" BY PIETRO CRESCENZI,  
XVTH CENTURY



*From the original in The Pierpont Morgan Library*  
 PLEASANCE, FROM "HOURS" OF ANNE DE BRETAGNE,



*From the original in The Pierpont Morgan Library*  
 HORTUS INCLUSUS, FROM "BREVIAIRY" OF  
 MAXIMILIAN I OF AUSTRIA, 1495

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Gothic marble fountain might spout water into a round basin overflowing through an open conduit embedded in the sod, or there might be a pool that mediæval ladies would not modestly shrink from using for bathing purposes.

Often the plan was so naïvely simple that it could have been drawn by a small child. Inside a square or oblong quadrangle, protected by a gaily painted fence of criss-cross lattice-work, the ground would be laid out in a series of small rectangular beds suggesting the squares on a chess-board. Sometimes it was merely intended for a herbary but, even so, the fragrance as well as the beauty of the flowers must have added to the pleasure of taking an airing there. Choicest of all was a *Roseto* devoted wholly to roses.

The larger pleasaunce beyond the moat might be merely a pleached alley, a walk edged with clipped evergreens, like the one at *Castello Bufalini* at S. Giustino, or a bowling-green. More often there was a flowery orchard. Then the crimsoning pomegranates, golden oranges and lemons, ruddy apples, pears, plums and figs, in various shades of green and purple, would ripen on trees planted in staggered rows, above a field of grass richly spangled with wild anemones, daisies and iris intermingled with more cultivated carnations, gillyflowers and columbines.

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In the centre there might be a fountain, or a grass-plot large enough to use for playing games, and a bench or two, with sides of brick and cushioned with fine turf. In a fifteenth century picture Stefano da Zevio has represented the Madonna and Child, with Saint Catherine and a host of fairylike angels, seated upon a flowery mede enclosed by rose-arbours. In one corner is a "Fountain sealed" as described in the Song of Songs. Vying with the vivid colours of the flowers is the brilliant plumage of many birds.

The orchard carpeted with flowers was the particular kind of garden that developed to its greatest perfection in the Middle Ages. Many old tapestries and pictures are devoted to representations of willowy ladies in trailing brocades, and their decorative cavaliers, wearing parti-colored doublets and hose, amusing themselves by walking or dancing under the fruit-laden trees or on the bespangled green. At other times they can be seen seated on the turf, garland-making, enjoying picnics or listening to the music of a guitar. Evidently the pleasance was a favourite spot for love-making and recreation.

Story telling also took place there as we may make sure by reading Boccaccio's prelude to the third day in the *Decameron*. When the terrible plague ravaged Florence in 1348, seven lovely girls and three young



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men are said to have taken refuge on a hill-top above the rippling waters of the river Mugnone on the road to Fiesole. The author relates that then the Queen led them to a very fine palace erected above the plain on rising ground. After they had visited the many luxurious apartments and reposed awhile in the cor-tile, under the protection of the colonnade, where the courteous steward served delicious refreshments, the gate of the walled garden was thrown open. Upon entering, the guests were delighted with the straight walks shaded by arbours covered by vines bearing clusters of ripe grapes, the beauty of the trees and the fragrance of the flowers. In the midst of the garden was a flowery mede, "a square plot resembling a meadow, flourishing with high grass, herbs, and plants, besides a thousand diversities of flowers, looking as if they had been painted there." It was circled around by verdant cypresses and orange-trees, their branches plenteously stored with fruit and fresh blossoms pleasing to the eye and deliciously fragrant. In the midst of this flowery mede stood a fountain of white marble, the water gushing up above a central figure, standing on a column, and descending with a pleasant murmur into the basin below.

The sight of this garden so highly pleased the ladies and gentlemen that they did not hesitate to say



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that if any paradise remained to be seen on the earth, it could only be contained in this enclosure. "Keen was their enjoyment as they sauntered about, wreathing their heads with flowers and listening to the birds sing melodiously." Then they sat at tables placed around the fountain and intermingling song and dance banqueted in a sumptuous manner. Finally they ended the happy day with a round of storytelling.

The villa thus described has been identified with the *Villa Palmieri*. Originally it was known as *Scifanoia* meaning "avoid care," synonymous with the Greek "Pausilipon" and the French "Sans Souci," a favorite name for a sylvan retreat intended to provide an escape from the cares of city life. Built as far back as 1259 for the Cione di Fini family, later it was bought by Nuccio Solosmei, a noble Florentine, who put three coats of arms and three heads over the doorway and renamed the villa *Tre Visi*; thus it was called for three centuries. After undergoing many changes the house and gardens, as they now appear, seem to belong to the late Renaissance.

All over Italy the hill-tops are crowned by mediæval castles but in very few of them does the pleasure present its original appearance. The settings are there, but the jewels they formerly con-

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tained have melted away. As the love of gardens spreads, and the funds for their maintenance are no longer lacking, doubtless new plantations of evergreens and flowers will relieve the desolation.

A galaxy of such castellated residences strike the eye at every turn upon the hills above the valley of the Arno, many of them designed or made over by Michelozzo Michelozzi, the celebrated architect so often employed by Cosimo the Elder. Among others are the *Torre di Bellosguardo* built by Michelozzo, with box-edged parterres on terraces affording superb views towards the snow-capped mountains at the south; *La Strozzeria* on a neighbouring hill-top, with a pleasance adjoining the castle, and, far below, a matchless pool of great antiquity hidden by lofty walls and superb old cypresses; also the *Villa Salviati-Turri* remodelled by the Salviati family in the fifteenth century and recently restored by Signor Turri, who is perfecting a sunken garden and an evergreen pleasance in keeping with his crenelated towers.

*Il Trebbio*, scowling upon its inaccessible eyrie above a precipice overlooking the valley of the Mugello, is a mediæval stronghold that has escaped external alterations. The inside cortile, with a staircase leading to the second story, is attractive. Out-

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side, a simple little pleasance has charm, though it is of no particular importance. Cosimo de Medici, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, lived here as a child and occasionally returned later with his wife, Eleanora di Toledo, to indulge in his favourite pastimes of hunting and hawking.

Still more closely associated with the Medici, and also near the valley of the Mugello not far below *Il Trebbio*, stands *Cafaggiuolo*, with tower and walls ending in similar machicolations. It was not erected, however, until the fifteenth century by Cosimo, the Elder, who employed Michelozzo Michelozzi as his architect and wished to have a fastness modelled along the lines of a preceding period to make it a safer retreat from possible plots against his family in Florence. Cosimo often stayed here and rejoiced that all the land, visible from his windows, formed part of his estate, while deploring the fact that this was not true of the Medici villa at Fiesole.

To *Cafaggiuolo* Cosimo's son Piero sent his clever boys Lorenzo and Giuliano to spend much of their boyhood under the care of their remarkable mother Lucrezia Tornabuoni. Later when the Pazzi conspirators killed Giuliano and attempted to take Lorenzo's life in the Florentine Duomo, it was to *Cafaggiuolo* that he consigned his family for safety.

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Here Lorenzo's sons studied with Angelo Poliziano, the celebrated poet and scholar whose pagan proclivities scandalised their narrow-minded mother, Clarice Orsini, far more than their grandmother Lucrezia. Poliziano complained bitterly to Lorenzo that Clarice was a demoralizing influence and wasted the time of precocious little Giovanni, the future boy-cardinal and later Pope Leo X, by obliging him to read the psalms instead of the Greek or Latin classics then so admired by all the great scholars.

As combining the characteristics of a Mediæval castle with certain Renaissance innovations, the *Villa Belcaro* near Siena forms a connecting link between the Middle Ages and the following era. Erected on a hill-top, difficult to approach and limited as to space, the battlemented ramparts forming the enceinte remain unaltered, but within their confines Baldassare Peruzzi was employed by the Turamini family to make some important changes. The architect built the owner's house on one side of the inner courtyard and opposite it placed a smaller building for the servants' quarters. At one end of the cortile he set apart a small garden protected by a brick screen with a charming niche, ensconcing a well-head in the centre, flanked by archways supporting finely wrought iron gates. The small and simple parterre has been

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encroached upon by a chapel and a lemon-house designed by Peruzzi.

Another castle with crenelated towers, named *Celsa*, rising above a wooded valley a little further from Siena, has preserved an appearance of great antiquity although its original austerity was somewhat lessened during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The stone screen, with a central entrance between arched windows protected by wrought-iron grilles, secluding the courtyard from outside observation, is undoubtedly a seventeenth century embellishment. Across the driveway, and centering on the entrance to the castle, is a small garden that looks as though it dated from the Renaissance. North of the castle, beyond a rosary and approached by a monumental stairway, is a decorative reservoir.

At *Bracciano*, a hill-town high above a lovely lake northwest of Rome on the road to Viterbo, the war-like Orsini built one of their many fortresses in 1460. Driven forth from another stronghold by the Colonna, they spared no pains to make this huge pile impregnable, strengthening it with frowning turrets, battlements and a moat that would keep their enemies at bay. There is a small pleasance on the southern side of mediæval appearance. Outside the moat, and



CASTELLO BUFALINI, AT SAN GIUSTINO





FLOWERY MEDE, STEFANO DA ZEVIO, XVTH CENTURY

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connected with the castle by a narrow bridge, is a large garden that may have been planned at an early date, some of its architectural features being added later. Although the long straight paths and rectangular beds have a rather neglected appearance, it is a romantic spot. The stone fountain, balustraded pool, and gateway ornamented by obelisks are worthy of notice. But above all there is walk along the parapet, shaded by fine old ilexes, affording a superb view of the hillsides, mantled by misty-green olives and emerald vineyards, that embed the sapphire lake far below.

This castle was the home of Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, who, falling deeply in love with Vittoria Accoramboni, was accused of plotting to have her husband, Francesco Peretti, murdered after he had strangled his own wife Isabella de Medici, daughter of Cosimo I. As his power of life and death over the members of his family was absolute Isabella's murder was condoned, and, his complicity in the plot against Peretti being unproven, the lovers might have married and lived happily had not two Popes put a ban upon their marriage. After spending four years together at the *Rocca* of *Bracciano*, Paolo and Vittoria fled to Venetia. Not a cen-

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tury later another Prince of Bracciano married Anne de la Trémoille, the unofficial ambassadress of Louis XIV to Rome, who was forced to live at this castle occasionally much against her will. As often as she could escape from its dismal solitude this "Princesse des Ursins" would join her sister the Duchess of Lante, not far away at Bagnaia, where the lovely villa was filled with life and gaiety.

In the south at Ravello, a hill-town above Amalfi, the *Villa Rufalo*, with its Saracen tower dating from the twelfth century, contains a charming little courtyard with Byzantine ornamentation. The comparatively modern garden, no matter how well-planted, would shrink into insignificance beside the matchless view of wild romantic mountains and the rock-bound sea dashing against the precipitous cliffs below.

Far away in Venetia another old and interesting castle is that of *Malpega*. It was bought from the Venetian government for a hundred gold ducats by Bartolomeo Colleone, the famous condottiere, whose services to the Republic of Venice were commemorated by Verrochio's equestrian statue. His castle was described by one of his many distinguished visitors as "a square surrounded by a moat and entered by a drawbridge; a fine palace with decorated halls and

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chambers, a watch-tower and magnificent gardens." Here the general passed his old age, in patriarchal style, until his death in 1475. Unfortunately at present flowers are lacking in the neglected pleasaunce.

From the descriptions by Pietro Crescenzi of Bologna in his *De Agricultura* written in the fourteenth century, but not printed until 1471, we can picture an ideal pleasaunce carried to an unusual degree of perfection on a small or a large scale. His book had widespread influence at a later period.

The flowery orchard, in Crescenzi's opinion, could be combined with a herbary in a square protected by walls or by a palisade of clipped willows, poplars, or olives. In the centre was to be an open space planted with grass and ornamented by a fountain. Apples, pears and pomegranates, among other fruit-trees, might shoulder cypresses and laurels. Around the outside was to be a border of sweet-smelling herbs including sage, marjoram, mint and lavender. Grassy banks were to be provided for seats and long arbours covered by roses or grapevines for shady walks.

A different kind of enclosure Crescenzi recommends subdividing into three parts:—a small section for flowers, an orchard and a meadow. Here, too, he advises having a pergola which seemed to be the

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inevitable accompaniment of every ornamental plantation.

In *De Agricultura* the law is also laid down for making a princely pleasure ground of twenty acres or more, on the scale of the Boboli Gardens in Florence or the Borghese Villa in Rome. This was to resemble a park with groves where animals could run wild, aviaries for pheasants, partridges and a variety of singing birds, besides ponds for preserving fish. The author adds "Moreover let us remember that great adornment to such a park would be given by trees that never lose their green leaves;—pines, cypresses, oranges, lemons, and even palms if they will thrive there." So, unfortunately, even at this early date, long before the hotel-keepers on the Riviera thought of using it to deceive people as to the mild winter climate there, the tropical palm had begun to find its way to Italy from Africa or perhaps from the Valencian coast of Spain.

The mediæval spirit has nowhere been more delightfully expressed in a rustic atmosphere than in the *Villa Casale* on the side of a high hill above Castello near Florence. Here is an old farm which has belonged to the ancestors of the present owner, Filippo Tosini, for many centuries. The battlemented walls, with turrets at the two lower corners, enclosing





THE TEMPLE, VILLA CASALE, CASTELLO





VILLA SALVIATI-TURRI, FLORENCE

## MIDDLE AGES TO RENAISSANCE

the kitchen-garden, the simple little parterre next the low-lying house, and the wooded slope, intersected by shady paths that lead to a primitive *tempietto* and lichen-spotted statues of greyish stone, have an unsophisticated charm. Behind the characteristic wall, built high to protect the flower-garden from the north wind, stands a huge tank storing an abundant water-supply for irrigation purposes and furnishing the children with a miniature lake where they are fond of sailing their toy boats. Near by is a grove of ancient ilexes. Indeed on every side the prospect pleases without a single jarring note, although each succeeding generation has left its imprint, and the literal-minded purist might complain that everything did not belong to the same period. For that matter neither do the lichens that soften the stonework and mellow the charm of balustrades and statuary.

This is no retreat for tired politicians or idle noblemen, but the home of a family who for centuries have tilled the soil, pressed wine from grapes cultivated in their vineyards and oil from fruit borne on their olive-trees. Theirs has been the happy life of the *villa rustica*, so feelingly described by Walter Pater, as it was practised through the middle ages and still exists in the more remote parts of Italy.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

The love of making trees and plants grow, of tending barnyard animals and fowls, and of watching over herds of sheep and goats continues to be one of the few unfailing sources of happiness.



## CHAPTER IV

### TOWN GARDENS

IN Italian cities, as early as the fourteenth century, prosperous citizens began to enjoy having, as extensions to their houses, enclosures shaded by pergolas and gay with a few kinds of flowers. Sometimes in the heart of the town such an enclosure was restricted to a small back-yard, a more modern prototype of the peristyle familiar to the Romans; but in a less crowded quarter or perhaps just outside the walls, there was often a *prato* or flowery meadow covering a larger piece of ground, and reminiscent of the mediæval pleasaunce. A few of these gardens, that added so much to the joy of living at the dawn of the Renaissance, still continue to be cherished by their owners and to give strangers a thrill of pleasure. Records of their existence are incomplete and they are often hidden in unexpected places.

It is interesting to study the old plans of different cities and to follow the development of various characteristic features. In the more crowded sections, rich citizens built large houses usually around a central court, corresponding to the Roman atrium or the

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Spanish patio, entered from the narrow street through an archway wide enough to admit the horses and carriages accustomed to stand on the stone pavement. A second archway opened opposite the first one across the court and afforded a vista of another less formal enclosure, resembling a Greek peristyle though not necessarily forming an integral part of the house. This out-of-door living-room was furnished with perhaps four large flower-beds centering on a circular fountain-basin, stone benches, and a table under a shady pergola. Statues stood above the fountains, or at the ends of the patio, and ornamental terra-cotta flower-pots containing laurel, orange or lemon trees, headed into balls, supplied accents at regular intervals.

One of the earliest Renaissance dwellings embracing two enclosures with vistas through the centre is the *Palazzo Piccolomini*, the Archbishop's residence, at Pienza, a few miles west of Montepulciano. This little town owes its name to Æneas Silvius Piccolomini, celebrated as Pope Pius II. He was born here in 1405 and half a century later commissioned Bernardo Rossellino, the collaborator of Leon Battista Alberti in the reconstruction of the church of St. Peter and of the Vatican in Rome, to design a group of buildings around the *Piazza del Duomo*.



GARDEN, PALAZZO PICCOLOMINI, PIENZA

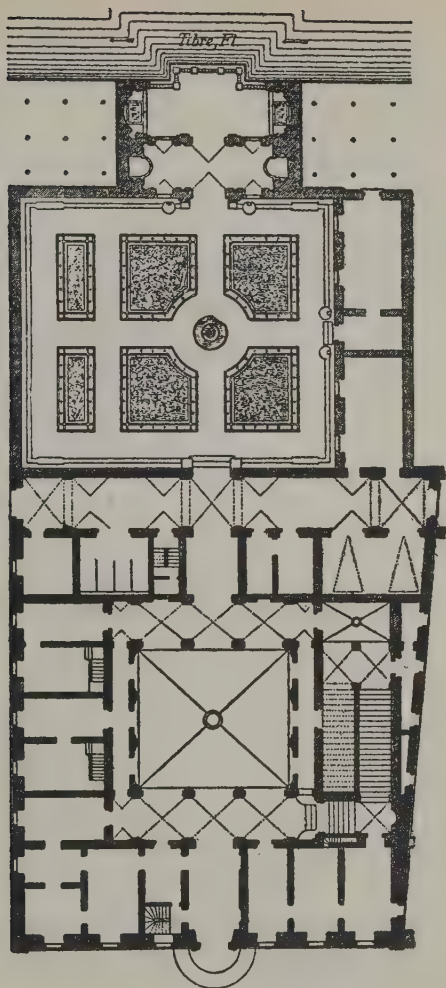


COURTYARD, PALAZZO PICCOLOMINI, PIENZA





FEAST IN A GARDEN, FROM A XVIIth CENTURY PICTURE



PALAZZO SACCHETTI

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

At Toscanella, at the back of the Bishop's Palace, is another charming garden-court, while at Città di Castello behind the *Palazzo Vitelli* there is not only a good garden but, near the bastion, a little frescoed *Palazzina* and several other typical features.

Antonio da San Gallo the younger, a member of the celebrated family of Florentine architects, having grown rich in the service of Pope Paul II, built a house and gardens for himself in Rome above the Tiber with an entrance on the Via Giulia. The plan, although on a much smaller scale, resembles that of the magnificent Farnese Palace he had built for Cardinal Farnese many years earlier. At the back of the house lay a charming walled garden, with a fountain in the centre of four large flower-beds. On one side was a pavilion that may have served as a lemon-house, and overhanging the Tiber was a charming loggia, with three arches framing a view extending to the verdant slopes of Mount Janiculum and including, in the architect's day, a glimpse of St. Peter's high walls and unfinished dome. San Gallo died in 1546, soon after his residence was completed, and since then it has been known as the *Palazzo Sacchetti*.

Before Alexander Farnese was elevated to the papacy as Paul III, his fortune had been made by

## TOWN GARDENS

his sister Giulia's influence over the Borgia Pope Alexander VI. Created a cardinal by Alexander in 1493, he bought some property in Rome and employed Antonio da San Gallo to construct for him the magnificent *Palazzo Farnese*, now the residence of the French ambassador. After San Gallo's death the work was continued by Michelangelo, Vignola and Giacomo della Porta. At the back of the palace was a large cloistered garden and beyond it a small one on the bank of the river. To connect this garden with a villa, bought from the Chigi family and known as the *Farnesina*, the second Cardinal Alexander Farnese intended to build a bridge across the Tiber but this ambitious project was never carried out. Unfortunately, the little that is left of the garden behind the palace has become so overgrown by unshapely trees and shrubs that it looks best when seen from a distance.

The charming little palace of *La Farnesina* was originally built, opposite the *Villa Colonna*, by the architect Peruzzi for the rich banker Agostino Chigi, early in the sixteenth century. Here he gave a gorgeous open-air entertainment, in honour of Leo X, where the erection of statues of Venus, Mars and Minerva was explained by a flattering inscription comparing the rulers Alexander VI and Julius II to

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Leo X as follows; "Venus has had her time and Mars his, now is the reign of Minerva." The little formal garden outside the room containing Raphael's celebrated frescoes, on a terrace above the Tiber, has lost many of its most attractive features but still retains two small pavilions overhanging the river and other vestiges of its original beauty.

In Florence small gardens became numerous both in the midst of the town and on the outskirts during the fifteenth century. There is a sketch by Pinturichio of a typical design for laying out a back-yard preserved among the original drawings in the Uffizi Gallery. The house is comparatively small and without an inner courtyard. The garden covers an oblong piece of ground enclosed both by a wall and a colonnade. In the centre is a fountain and there are eight squares subdivided into flower beds, no two of the same pattern.

Under the influence of the Medici, their city took the lead in the development of pleasure grounds both large and small, and with the revival of the arts this movement became widespread. Cosimo the Elder not only encouraged Florentine scholars, but welcomed distinguished philosophers who came from the East to renew interest in Greek literature, and helped them to found the Platonic Academy, so cele-

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brated in the days of his grandson Lorenzo. The superb new *Palazzo Medici* on the Via Larga, designed for Cosimo by Michelozzo Michelozzi (later known as the Riccardi palace) remained the residence of his descendants for a hundred years. It was characterized as having 'given a home, not only to many great men, but to knowledge herself.'

The courtyard with its colonnade, its arched windows on the upper stories and heavy cornices, was an inspiration to later architects. Donatello, who often collaborated with Michelozzo and to whom Cosimo was especially devoted, modelled the medallions, suggested by antique cameos, above the colonnade. His patron also commissioned him to execute the youthful David now in the Bargello, which was originally placed in the centre of the court.

Opening from the courtyard is a delightful garden, partly enclosed by the walls of the palace, and with a loggia at one end. The circular stone curb around the old fountain basin, the statuary, and orange trees in large ornamental flower-pots, each raised on its own little pedestal, above green beds filled with low, level traceries of boxwood less than a foot above ground, and the paths paved with effective rustic mosaics, make this an attractive spot, both in winter and summer. Originally, the Judith



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

modelled by Donatello was the chief ornament and it was rivalled by specimens of the topiarist's skill clipped from boxwood,—ships with unfurled sails, elephants, and other animals.

A few years after Cosimo's death, his son Piero gave a series of magnificent entertainments at the palace in honour of the marriage of his elder son Lorenzo and Clarice Orsini. The noble courtyard and the adjoining garden were the scene of banquets and dancing for three successive days. A contemporary account relates that the bride, with about fifty young women who were dancers, feasted under the loggia in the garden, while, beneath the colonnade surrounding the courtyard, at long tables covered with the finest white damask, sat seventy or eighty honoured citizens. The younger dancing men were served in the hall on the ground floor and the bridegroom's mother entertained the older women upstairs. Trumpeters, preceding the stewards and waiters, announced each fresh relay of food. Towards evening the dancers, richly apparelled in many-coloured silks and gold and silver brocades, held the floor until supper time.

To the fondness for art of Piero, Cosimo's son and successor, and to the encouragement of his wife, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the palace owed many of the

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famous works of art contained there. He commissioned Benozzo Gozzoli to decorate the chapel with the bewitching frescoes still ornamenting the walls, where the Three Kings, bearing gifts for the infant Christ, appear as the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Byzantine Emperor and Piero's oldest son Lorenzo. Following in their train are the Greek scholars befriended by Cosimo and a host of other well-known figures. Piero also ordered several interesting pictures from Sandro Botticelli, often an inmate of the palace. In one of them, the Adoration of the Magi, painted about 1467, and now hanging in the Uffizi Gallery, portraits are again included of several of the Medici and of their talented friends. Of Piero's careworn appearance, however, we can obtain a more accurate idea from his bust by Mino da Fiesole now in the Bargello.

In the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the palace was a museum, overflowing with the paintings and sculptures he had added to the previous collections. Verrochio's little David, now in the Bargello, stood in the centre of the court, while the Boy with the Dolphin above a fountain-basin, now transferred to the *Palazzo Vecchio*, seems to have ornamented the garden at the rear, and Judith with the head of Holofernes also stood there.

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Near the monastery of San Marco was a delightful garden laid out according to Lorenzo's instructions and ornamented with ancient statuary. In the loggias here, young artists were allowed to pursue their studies. Among them one of Lorenzo's favourites was Michelangelo.

It is a delightful surprise to find behind some old palace, facing upon a dusty street with noisy trams running by the door, peaceful gardens where the widespreading branches of trees, hundreds of years old, shade box-edged parterres. The largest of these gardens in Florence are on the outskirts of the town. A spacious series open into each other behind the *Palazzo Capponi*, near the end of the Via Gino Capponi. From the windows at the back there is a pleasant outlook over a grassplot with flower-beds encircling the stalwart trunk of a glossy-leaved magnolia. At one side is an old lemon-house where time has softened the veneer of shell and pebble decoration.

Looking from the windows behind the *Palazzo Corsini* on the Via del Prato, a level pleasure ground makes a striking picture. Laid out by Gherardo Silvani, its dominant feature is a long straight path, centering on a fountain near a loggia, designed by Buontalenti, beneath the house, running thence to the farthest end of the lot and furnishing a far-reaching



GARDEN-COURT, PALAZZO MEDICI, FLORENCE



LA PALAZZINA, PALAZZO VITELLI, CITTA DI CASTELLO



GARDEN-PAVILION, PALAZZO GIUSTINIANI, PADUA



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vista. The apparent length of this vista is increased by placing statues on each side that diminish in size the farther they stand from the house. Tall trees and box-edged flower-borders, following along the same lines, complete a very simple composition. At Vicenza, entered from a courtyard behind the *Palazzo Quirini dall' Ore*, built by Palladio, is another long walk where the same idea is carried out on a far more extensive scale, with vases and obelisks besides statuary. Ending the vista there, on the top of a mount, stands a round *tempietto*.

Wars and the rumours of war that darken so many pages of fifteenth century Italian history, failed to drive gardens out of existence. Lucca, a republican city not far from Florence in Tuscany, although frequently engaged in conflicts with her neighbours and often divided against herself, had at least a fair share of greenery. Her many towers, numbered, like those of Pisa, by the thousand, bore witness to countless local feuds. Oddly crowning the topmost battlements were little over-hanging plantations, with tufts of verdure waving against the blue sky. The last to wear one of these laurel and ilex coronets is the machicolated tower rising above the Gothic facade of the *Palazzo Guinigi*. One of its owners was Paolo Guinigi, distinguished as a leader who fought bravely



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against the domineering Florentines and other aggressive foes. It is, however, as the husband of the beautiful Ilaria del Caretto, whose recumbent figure carved in marble by Jacopo della Quercia sleeps in the *Duomo*, that this renowned defender of the city is chiefly known today.

Diagonally opposite the *Duomo* stands the *Palazzo Celanni* with a vine-covered tunnel, on top of the massive garden wall, entered from the second story drawing-room window. The imposing garden entrance on the piazza is in keeping with the palace, but, perhaps owing to the height of the walls, the enclosure is entirely devoted to trees and shrubbery which have been allowed to run almost wild. Bartolomeo Ammanati, chiefly known as the architect of the Pitti Palace, designed both house and wall. In this neighbourhood there are also several roofs furnished with pergolas and flowers.

The most interesting garden within the old fortifications lies behind the *Palazzo Controni-Pfanner* near the basilica of San Frediano, the Irish monk. Though sadly fallen from its early high estate, the plan remains unaltered, while an elevated fountain, picturesque Baroque statuary, and flower-pots filled with orange-trees still ornament the unkempt parterre. At the further end of the oblong plot backed

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against the retaining wall of the ramparts, is a casino now used to house the doves which are constantly fluttering over the flowers. On one side, the venerable tower of *San Frediano* completes a charming picture.

On a far larger scale were the pleasure grounds of the *Palazzo Bottini al Giardino* with a rusticated garden wall and gateway, supposed to have been designed by Buontalenti. Inside the enclosure are vestiges of its former glory, but the ground has apparently been taken over by a market-gardener who has supplanted roses and carnations by turnips and cabbages.

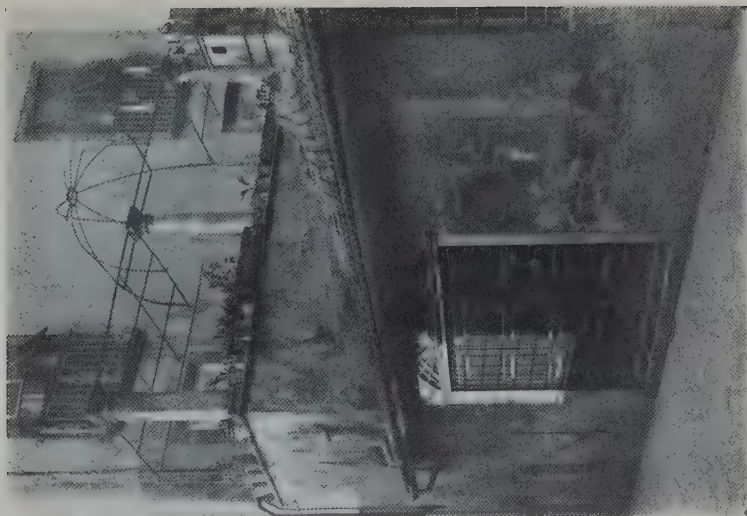
In the northern duchies during the last decades of the sixteenth century, the rulers of Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, and Parma, closely connected by marriage, had courts that rivalled in splendour the magnificence of the Medici. Connected with their villas and palaces were gardens constructed to delight the ladies of their families who cherished an especial affection for trees and flowers.

Under Duke Ercole I, Ferrara attained its height as an artistic and intellectual centre. Architecture was his great interest and he laid out the broad straight streets in the *Addizione Erculea* that entitle him to be called the first city planner in modern times. His residence, the *Castello Vecchio*, occupied

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a block of buildings in the centre of the town. Recent restorations have brought out the beauty of the mediæval *cortile* where his daughter Isabella, Marchesa di Mantua, welcomed her newly married sister-in-law Lucrezia Borgia. *Chiathamone*, the small hanging garden which Ercole built for his wife Eleanora of Aragon, outside the *Sala dell' Aurora* on the third story of the palace, still overlooks the city, though concealed from the street by a high balustrade. Opening into this terrace is a frescoed loggia. With the help of Alberti's *Architettura* the Duke laid out near the castle another garden called *La Fontana*, but that has disappeared completely.

Going to Mantua from this splendid castle and its brilliant court, no wonder that Ercole's vivacious daughter Isabella d'Este, wife of Marquis Giovanni Francesco III, soon began to beautify her surroundings there. In the *Corte Reale*, her new home, she constructed on the ground floor, near the miniature apartments of the dwarfs, her famous *Camerino* next a glorified grotto paved with polychrome tiles and ornamented with columns and niches containing statuary. On one side opened a garden filled with her favorite fruit-trees and her choice flowers. A fine Renaissance well-head still stands there encircled by potted orange-trees. Surprisingly placed on a level



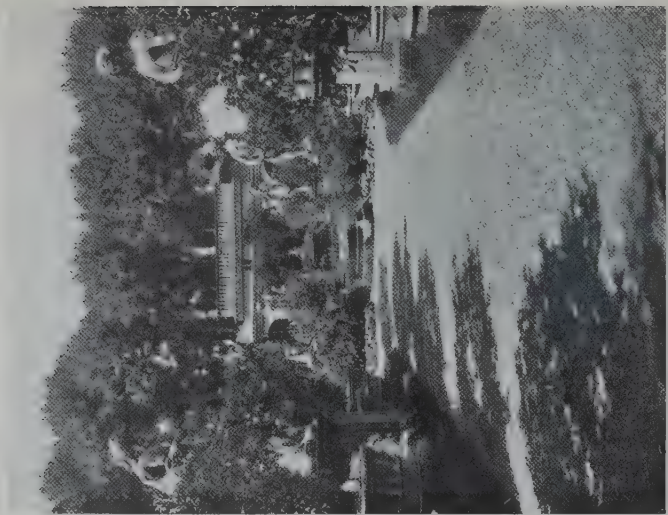
ROOF-GARDEN, LUCCA



PALAZZO CELANNI, LUCCA



PALAZZO QUIRINI DALL'ORO, VICENZA



GARDEN, PALAZZO CONTRONI-PFANNER, LUCCA



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with the second story, enclosed by the outer walls of the banqueting hall and a series of stately apartments, is a secluded quadrangle with pleasant walks between box-edged borders, called the *giardino pensile*.

At Milan in honour of his young bride Beatrice d'Este, Isabella's sister, doubtless Lodovico il Moro added to the gardens in the immense courtyard of the *Castello*. Since the castle is being conscientiously restored perhaps a semblance of the original planting will also appear in the course of time, instead of the monotonous lawns now covering the ground.

An old ducal garden, on the bank of the little river at Parma, and connected by the *Ponte Verde* with the *Palazzo della Pilotta*, is now the *Giardino Pubblico*. It forms a delightfully shaded retreat in warm weather. Rows of ilexes spread their branches over the main path and on either side lie flower-beds ornamented with statuary. This ilex alley leads to a lake, with a conspicuous baroque fountain on an island in the centre. An alcove, beyond the lake at one corner of the enclosure, sets apart a small open-air auditorium and a *tempietto* available for use as a stage.

At Genoa the present *Via Garibaldi* was laid out, not long after the middle of the sixteenth century, as the *Strada Nuova* by Galeazzo Alessi, a Perugian ar-



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chitect. He and his pupil Castello Bergamesco also designed many of the noble palaces that line this street skirting the hillside in the upper part of the older section of the town. Tempting glimpses of stately inner courts with wall-fountains, colonnades and handsome staircases arrest the attention on either hand. Pictures by Veronese or Tiepolo might have been inspired by perspectives through archways flanked by marble columns framing, towards the west, a turquoise sky softened by fleecy clouds above the sapphire sea. On the opposite side of the street, where the ascending slope has been cut back to make room for lofty dwellings, the bank is held in place by very high retaining walls, often ornamented by an imposing niche, with a fountain at the back of the courtyard opposite the central entrance. No extra space being available on the street level behind the palace, the garden was perforce raised to a terrace graded from the slope above the retaining wall and entered by climbing a staircase in the courtyard, or more directly from windows on the second story. With the introduction of new streets these gardens have been gradually swept away. The *Palazzo Podestà*, built by Bergamesco from Alessi's plans in 1567, is a fortunate exception. Later a grotto was added by Filippo Parodi.

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Similar in position, though reduced in scale, is the terrace above the fifteenth century *Palazzo Giovio* at Como, now occupied by the *Museo Civico*. The proportions of the courtyard and of the various architectural features there are altogether charming. A wrought iron *clairvoyé*, at the rear of the courtyard, opens through a central gateway opposite a niche in the end retaining wall, that is flanked by twin curving stairways leading to an upper level, overshadowed by fine old trees. For a small backyard this presents an ideal scheme.

Speaking of Venice, as it appeared in 1494, Casola writes in his "Viaggio" that nothing aroused his admiration more in the city built above the water than the number of lovely gardens he saw there. The monasteries had their cloister-garths and orchards, the churches their vineyards, and the houses their walled gardens green in winter as well as summer. Pergolas diversified the monotonous level of the ground, well-heads carved with Byzantine designs answered both useful and ornamental purposes. Wrought-iron grilles covered windows opening through the walls to afford glimpses of adjacent canals, or of more extensive views across the lagoons where the effects of light and shadow added singular beauty to the scene. Statues were frequently placed on gate-posts and

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on top of walls as well as in the little formal parterres whose symmetrical plans are shown on all the old maps. Especially interesting are the water gateways with steps leading from the garden wall into the canal. The ornamental cresting that finishes the tops of some of the early walls is also characteristic.

A picture in the *Accademia Carrara* at Bergamo, by an unknown painter of the school of Veronese, gives a charming impression of an unusually large Venetian garden subdivided by lattice-work fences with posts surmounted by potted plants. At one end of the broad central walk is an arcaded pavilion, while at the other is an entrance to the canal with an attendant setting the table under a vine-covered arbour and a lady about to enter her gondola from the pier, while a companion seated there holds her fishing-rod over the water.

The larger pleasure grounds were often situated at the Giudecca, at Murano and on other more distant islands. Among the names of distinguished families who enjoyed houses set amidst gardens on the Giudecca were Cornaro, Barbaro, Dandolo, Vendramini and Mocenigo. Sansovino enthusiastically describes the villa of *Sante Cattaneo* where nothing was lacking that could refresh and delight the spirit. Adjoining a *cortile* ornamented with cascades was the gar-



WELL-HEAD, PALAZZO PESARO, VENICE



GARDEN-WALL, S. MARIA DELLA SALUTE, VENICE



STAIRWAY, MUSEO CIVICO, COMO

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den "rich in plants and rare flowers; at the end was a large loggia, charmingly frescoed, whence the eye could wander over the lagoon as far as Malmocco."

Navigero, the Venetian ambassador to Spain, who particularly admired the Generalife garden at Granada, took great interest in his own garden at Murano with its rows of apple and lemon-trees laid out in a quincunx. Other Murano gardens of this period are described as veritable earthly paradises, because of the freshness of the air and the beauty of their location, "haunts of nymphs and demi-gods."

From the canals there are many alluring glimpses through iron grilles, set in high crested walls, of evergreens and flowering shrubs; but upon closer inspection these plantations prove to have no especial design. Only two unusually extensive plots of ground, have been arranged with the possible intention of making them real gardens. Old maps show that a large pleasaunce at the corner of the *Sacca della Misericordia* behind the *Palazzo Contarini-Zaffiro*, was once formally laid out with straight paths, long pergolas, and numerous flower-beds. Near one end was a mysterious house supposed to be haunted by departed spirits and the scene of many strange stories. The garden still has a romantic atmosphere, but the original plan has wholly disappeared. On the Giu-



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decca the pleasure grounds laid out by the Edens have often been painted with their shady pergolas and long rows of white lilies and larkspur. There is, however, no logical expression of ideas from an architectural standpoint.

At the beginning of the Renaissance interest was shown in making collections of rare and exotic plants. Botanic gardens existed at most of the great universities and were the pride of various rulers. At *Poggio Imperiale* near Naples, Alfonso of Aragon had a botanic garden praised as the finest in Europe. The Medici made such collections at *Careggi* and *Poggio a Cajano*. Cosimo I was the founder of a botanical garden at Pisa and of the *Giardino Botanico dei Semplici* at Florence, where he was the first to cultivate medicinal plants brought from America. In 1545, a quaint circular *Orto Botanico* was laid out at Padua. Its plan, with a large square covering most of the ground, each quarter differently subdivided by stone copings into small beds forming simple designs, remains unaltered. Among other attractively planned botanical gardens the one at Urbino is perhaps the most successful.

The *Prato della Valle* at Padua served as a playground before the time of Christ, and since then theatrical performances and races have taken place there

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for many generations. It is also an open-air Hall of Fame, containing statues of all the great men who have made the university city famous. Here in the eighteenth century, Domenico Cerato laid out a formal lake with an island in the midst of an oval enclosure, thickly planted with plane-trees, on the site of the old Roman theatre. Only a short distance from the *Orto Botanico* and not far from the *Duomo*, it is a pleasant spot for the weary sight-seer to seek repose.

Architecturally speaking the most important feature forming part of a town garden was the *loggia*. Often it was placed at the back of the lot to serve instead of a wall for a screen. In Padua behind the *Palazzo Giustiniani*, built on the site of the house where Alvise Cornaro lived to such a ripe old age, he erected both a casino and a *loggia*. He was led to employ Falconetto, the Veronese, as his architect through their mutual friend Cardinal Bembo. On the lower floor of the *loggia* an arcade opening into the garden makes a charming place to enjoy the fresh air and sunshine protected from the wind. On the second story is a large hall that could be used for banquets and other festive occasions. The casino has a charming octagonal music-room and on each of its two stories a number of small rooms which seem to

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have been intended to house Cornaro's many guests, some of whom remained a year or two at a time. At eighty-three he wrote a book—"La Vita Sobra,"—advocating moderation in all things, and, practising what he preached, lived fifteen years longer.

In the eighteenth century when afternoon coffee-drinking became as customary in Italy as it is today in Germany, the garden was often provided with a quaint little edifice, its name phonetically spelled *caféaus*. In the "Tower of the Mirrors" Vernon Lee describes how she discovered by chance one of these toy houses adjoining a hanging-garden in the former citadel of Pisa. She found there a "circular salon surrounded by circular divans, and frescoed all over with life-sized Turks and Greeks and fair Circassians reclining in romantic valleys and sipping coffee amidst shawls and scimitars."



## CHAPTER V

### THE RENAISSANCE

SPRING was in the air at the dawn of the Italian Renaissance. Men and women banded together to evoke beauty from the past and to learn how to make it live again in the present. No longer were they blind to the wonders of nature and to the immanent loveliness of neighbouring hills and valleys. Thrilled with the joy of living, when not absorbed in a serious search for knowledge, they indulged light-heartedly in every form of gaiety. Villas rapidly sprang up outside the towns, and gardens increased in size and attractiveness. Thither went the learned members of the recently founded Platonic Academy to hold deep discussions, while neither young nor old needed much urging from the poets to leave the city for the country when roses deliciously perfumed the gardens, fountains splashed into marble basins and leafy bowers kept out the scorching rays of the summer sun.

As an interlude between the artless simplicity of the Mediæval pleasaunce and the carefully studied

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plans designed by the great architects of the Renaissance might be placed the rather fantastic descriptions of garden architecture illustrated in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a sort of archæological romance published by the Dominican Fra Francesco Colonna in 1480. This dream should be taken as a forecast of what his enthusiasm for the past might inspire in the future rather than as a description of the gardens that actually existed then. No sort of general plan is advocated but he supplies a wealth of interesting details based upon a surprising understanding of classical sculpture, architecture and garden accessories. It is hard to believe that he could never have seen the marble sarcophagi, the bronze tripods, and the marble Hermes not unearthed in the Pompeian peristyles and the Roman villas until long after his death. The hero of the romance falls asleep and in his dream first sees a great variety of classical remains;—temples, colonnades, pyramids, obelisks and fountains adorning a silent valley. Later he watches elephants, centaurs, and unicorns march in a triumphal procession and finally is carried in Cupid's festive barge to an enchanted island. He is entranced by pleasure grounds ornamented with elaborate box-edged parterres, topiary work, fountains and arbours. The unknown illustrator was especially

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successful in depicting a Mediæval *Hortus Inclusus* with a sexagonal pool overshadowed by an arched pergola and surrounded by merry-makers disporting themselves on a flowery mead.

Far below the high peak, that is capped by the little town of Bomarzo, on a sloping hillside that falls away abruptly into the valley, is a weird garden that might have been inspired by some of the fantastic descriptions in the Dream of Poliphilus. Pagan gods, exotic animals and figures illustrating old legends standing on crumbling terraces, were carved from boulders that nature seems to have dropped there by accident. On the side of a cliff the yawning mouth of a great Japanese-looking mask is the not very inviting entrance to a little cave hollowed from the solid rock and furnished with stone benches and a table. Not far away is an Oriental lady riding a life-sized elephant which is being attacked by a fierce leopard. Half concealed in a circumscribed hollow, a gigantic Orlando Furioso holding his mother upside down is about to rend her limb from limb. In another spot an enormous turtle carries a globe on its back. One may stumble unexpectedly across a reclining goddess or a head of Buddha seven or eight feet high carved in high relief upon walls of solid rock and half-covered with ivy. As an inscription inside a lit-



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

the pavilion reads "without going to foreign countries those who are fond of travel can find many exotic objects here." Only to the children of Bomarzo are these meadows peopled with gods and beasts familiarly known today. Their origin is veiled in mystery, but a tradition has been handed down that when the Orsini built their palace at Bomarzo, in the sixteenth century, the artists at work there amused themselves by carving these scattered pieces of stone into fantastic shapes. The temple near the entrance, though reported to have been designed by Vignola, could hardly be considered one of his masterpieces. It was intended to be the tomb of Giulia Farnese, wife of Giulio Orsini, and notorious for her intimacy with the Borgia Pope Alexander VI, but in the end her corpse was buried in Saint Peter's, where a nude statue representing her as Truth graced the tomb of her brother Paul III. From the Orsini, whose coat-of-arms, a rose upheld by a bear, ornaments the garden, the property passed to the family of Lante della Rovere also owners of the *Villa Lante* at Bagnaia, and finally, within comparatively recent years, it has fallen into the hands of the Borghese. Might they not be persuaded to attempt to arrest its decay?

In the Italian language, from an early date as at



THE ELEPHANT, HILLSIDE, BOMARZO



VILLA RICCARDI, NEAR FLORENCE, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY G. ZOCCHI



VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY G. ZOCCHI

## THE RENAISSANCE

present, a single word, *villa*, signifies a combination comprising both house and grounds. Since they were interdependent a site had to be chosen that was adapted to their harmonious development in the same general scheme. A wooded hillside, affording an extensive view of the surrounding country in at least one direction, with a sunny exposure and an abundant water-supply, furnished ideal conditions. Occasionally, however, the preference was given to a valley. Since nature never repeats itself each site had its own peculiar charm and the architect endeavoured to emphasize this individuality, besides evolving a creation peculiarly adapted to the particular owner's requirements.

There were two types of villas at the time of the Renaissance, just as there had been in the days of the Roman Emperors, a *villa suburbana* and a *villa rustica*, one was for city people who merely wished to go temporarily to the country, perhaps only for a day's recreation, and the other was for landed proprietors, whose farms were their homes and gave them occupation all the year round. In both there were walled gardens and other pleasure grounds of a more or less ornamental description. All over Italy architects began to be employed to design not only numerous country houses but settings framed to en-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

hance their design and afford a series of outdoor living-rooms that would be equally delightful in summer and winter.

One reason why open-air living-rooms became so popular may have been that the Italian climate has always made out-door life attractive at all seasons of the year. During winter, and part of spring and autumn, the badly heated apartments indoors, with their massive stone walls and deeply embrasured windows, seem damp and cold; while outside in the garden the air may be warmed by floods of sunshine. In summer, when every blind must be closed as a protection against scorching rays of the sun, no cooling breezes can make their way into the dwelling before night-fall. While the weather is hot, therefore, nothing is more refreshing than to linger beneath the closely woven branches of a dense grove, or in the dark recesses of an underground niche where the spray from a fountain tempers the atmosphere. Sunny parterres, shady bosquets and cool grottoes are not considered unnecessary luxuries, as in America, since they add so greatly to comfort.

While the Italian climate makes life in the open so attractive to people it is less favourable to annual and perennial plants. The winters are too cold and the summers too hot to encourage the flowers to bloom



## THE RENAISSANCE

and they are never plentiful except in springtime. In planning a garden, therefore, its essentials must be carried out in a permanent material like wood, brick or stone and in those varieties of trees and shrubs that remain always green. Walls of soft gray stone or fawn-colored stucco define the outer enclosure, stone curbs frame the flower-beds while fountains and statuary, of marble or *pietra serena*, accent the composition and dark spires of cypress rise in the background.

Only for a few brief weeks in spring time is the parterre painted with brilliant colours. Then masses of anemones, tulips and iris rival the rainbow. Soft pink clouds mantle the fruit-trees above a carpet of fragrant violets while yellow roses flame against gray walls. Gaily tinted stocks and verbenas brave the increasing heat, gorgeous oleanders, oranges and lemons are a host in themselves during summer, but late-blooming perennials are a negligible quantity.

Among the early founders of the Renaissance the great geniuses did not necessarily confine themselves to any one branch of art. Architects were often engaged in doing sculpture, thus Brunelleschi and Ghiberti both modelled reliefs in a competition for the award of the Baptistery near the Cathedral in Florence. Painters and sculptors, in turn, practised architecture including garden-design. Michelangelo is



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

said to have made the plans for the gardens at the *Villa dei Collazzi* near Florence, Raphael's designs for the *Villa Madama* created a sensation in Rome, while Montorsoli, a sculptor, built the *Villa Doria* in Genoa. Their many-sided activities gave them a breadth of vision far less uncommon than when the various branches of art drifted into the hands of specialists.

Outside Florence there was a rapid development of villas from farm centres, where houses and gardens retained a homelike quality not inharmonious with the bucolic atmosphere of outlying vineyards and orchards. The essentials were of modest size and their embellishment did not threaten to become extravagant except in rare instances.

In a characteristic lay-out of a Tuscan villa such as can still be seen on the outskirts of Florence, the approach to the dwelling, if it is not entered directly from the road, runs through a straight avenue of dark cypresses leading to a sunny forecourt at the front door. At the back of the house the descent of the hillside is made easy by stairways and ramps, connecting a series of terraces. At one end, opening from a living-room, lies a walled garden extending as far as a pavilion where lemon-trees are protected in winter. This general scheme naturally admits of many



HOUSE AND GARDEN, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO



WATER-GARDEN, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO



CYPRESS ARCADE, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO



THE SECRET GARDEN, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO

## THE RENAISSANCE

variations and the component parts are expressed in widely differing ways.

The tranquil homelike *Villa Capponi* at Arcetri stands in the direct line of descent from a fortified farm such as the one still remaining in almost its primitive condition on the height above Castello. In the fifteenth century, when the Bonacorsi family owned the estate, no doubt the tower on the garden-side of their farm-house was needed for defensive purposes. Later, after having been bought in 1572 by one of the rich and distinguished Capponis, Gino di Lodovico, in his hands and in those of his descendants various additions were made including the covered cortile and a pleasant loggia.

The long building, rising rather formidably close beside a steep road, has a more suave aspect from the higher level at the back. Here the restful green of the dense yew hedge and of the grass, carpeting a terrace that runs the full length of the house, is in keeping with its unaffected simplicity and with the breadth of the lovely view stretching over hill and dale to the horizon.

One end of the terrace opens between lofty gateposts, ornamented with griffins, into a charming little parterre, fenced off by an evergreen parapet. The joyous treatment of the high outside wall, with its



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

posts surmounted by urns and its curved copings, adds much to the beauty of the background.

The lower gardens can be approached by passing through the wrought iron gates at the opposite end of the terrace. Originally the first enclosure, with its box-edged parterre and vine-covered walls, was an almost invisible secret garden only to be reached from the house through a subterranean passageway that may have been also intended to provide a hidden means of escape from the house to the olive-orchard below in dangerous times. Down another flight of steps is a third terrace containing flower-beds and an oval pool, all in good keeping.

One of the few Tuscan villas that has remained almost unchanged in plan since the house and gardens were altered at the time of the Early Renaissance is *Cigliano*, near the little hill-town of San Casciano, above the Val di Pesa. The estate was bought early in the sixteenth century by Alessandro di Niccolò Antinori who rebuilt the house and laid out the gardens to appear very much as they do today. This friend of Cosimo de Medici is said to have employed Giuliano da San Gallo to build his great palace on the Via Tornabuoni, but there is no clue as to the architect who remodelled *Cigliano*. At first approach from the driveway the long low dwelling with

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spreading eaves, prison-like windows and a high-arched doorway has an austere, not to say forbidding, aspect; by contrast this makes the more ornate façade above the gay flower-garden at the back of the house an especially delightful surprise. The spreading eaves have disappeared and the straight roof lines have been broken by curves supporting a central pediment, a niche sheltering a seated Neptune. Panels with broad *sgraffito* bands and an incrustation of pebbles ornament the walls of the lemon-house while a row of urns is silhouetted against the skyline and reflected into the large square pool below. These Baroque innovations are due to the initiative of Niccolò Francesco Antinori at the close of the seventeenth century. His descendants live their today.

Two other villas at San Casciano deserve at least passing mention. At *Le Corte*, where the large but not especially interesting mansion belonging to Prince Corsini contains his collection of family portraits, the small garden forms but a remote appendage. Its quincunx plan and the planting, however, are good. Each quarter is sub-divided by diagonal paths and at their intersection in the centre of a circle an oleander casts a pleasant shadow. At the neighbouring villa of *Poggio Torselli*, near the village of



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Casa Vecchia, the approach is through a wonderful vial of fine old cypresses, which ascends straight to an impressive mansion showing the beauty of the Baroque style, when fancy is kept under restraint. At the back, closely connected with the house, is a long terrace with a typical out-curving stairway leading into a large sunken garden. A rather curious effect has been intentionally produced by spreading the boundaries at the two ends further apart as they grow further from the house making the oblong enclosure an imperfect parallelogram. When the ravages committed under English influence in the last century have been repaired, and the parterre is restored to its original design, it will become altogether delightful.

Among the sixteenth and seventeenth century country-seats, where the pleasure grounds, obviously laid out by a master hand, retain a touch of rustic simplicity, the *Villa Gamberaia* stands almost unrivalled in its especial appeal to garden-lovers. Time has only mellowed its beauty and no discordant innovations have been allowed to mar its harmonious ensemble.

True to accepted Renaissance principles, here, evidently, the environment has been treated as of almost more importance than the house, in working out



BOWLING GREEN, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO



THE BOSCO, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO



THE OLD LEMON GARDEN, VILLA GAMBERAIA, SETTIGNANO

## THE RENAISSANCE

the scheme. Not exceptionally the casino or country-house presented a severely simple appearance and its interior decoration seemed austere, while the accompanying pleasure-grounds were filled with joyous ornamentation.

*Gamberaia* covers only three acres, lying on terraces above the picturesque little hill-town of Settignano. In this small space are comprised a casino, three or four gardens, two groves, and a long grass alley prolonging a bowling-green. Near the casino is a chapel, and not far away is an old studio. Then there is a lemon-house with small buildings adjoining, and on the outskirts of the property lies an old vineyard. Breadth and simplicity characterize the main outlines of the composition, while it is marked by the rhythmic accentuation that gives such swing to the architecture of the Baroque period. The separate divisions were planned to contrast with each other, and differences of level add to the effect of variety besides increasing the apparent extent of the grounds.

A short driveway, between tall evergreen hedges, leads from the well-guarded gateway to the mansion, a dignified oblong structure, with cream-coloured walls of stucco and a red-tiled roof. Widespreading eaves betoken its Tuscan origin. Ornamentation is

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

confined to the stonework strengthening the four corners and to the openings for the lower windows. At each of the corners nearest the entrance rise a pair of massive arches that bring down the height of the house. One connects it with the chapel; the other provides a passageway, descending by a spiral stairway, concealed in the terminal pier, to the ground. Apart from these unusual archways, added much later, the façade has been hardly altered since the close of the sixteenth century.

On three sides of the house a walk of flagged stone is laid between the building and the greensward covering the encompassing terrace. A low parapet confines the outer edge of the terrace and provides a footing for stone dogs, looking like solemn sentinels, and for boldly chiseled urns. From this platform is an extensive view overlooking a vast plain threaded by the waters of the Arno and bounded by rising tiers of hills. Florence lies stretched like a rich, thickly piled carpet in the centre of the immense panorama.

Long ago at the south there were rectangular beds of herbs and vegetables intermingled with roses centring on a circular fishpond. The immediate predecessors of the present owner turned this plot of ground into the existing water-garden, an oblong



## THE RENAISSANCE

about seventy-five feet wide and one hundred and fifty feet in length, not counting the semicircle terminating the farther end. In each quarter is a long tank of shallow water and in the centre is a round pool that may indicate the site of the former fish-pond, since it is nearer one end of the garden than the other and causes the cross-path to divide the garden into unequal parts. Narrow borders, filled chiefly with iris and standard roses, flank the main walk, which is paved with small pebbles forming a rustic mosaic of simple design. Pyramidal yews and pink-flowering oleanders clipped into huge balls cast clear-cut shadows and prevent the design from becoming monotonous. A high screen of ancient cypresses shuts out the western view, while on the east a row of tub-shaped, broad-leaved evergreens half conceals the adjacent bowling-green. At the farthest end tall cypresses have been trained over an iron framework to form a semicircular arcade that is reflected in still another pool. The semicircle is also accentuated by beveled turf edged with dwarf box, an ingenious method of strengthening the contour and giving it scale.

Parallel with the water-garden lies a bowling-green. Thirty feet wide and about one hundred and fifty feet long, it is covered with turf that somehow



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

gives the impression of being centuries old, disproving the common assertion that grass has no place in Italian pleasure-grounds. One end is closed by a balustrade with posts supporting miniature obelisks and, in the centre, a statue of Diana boldly enough modelled to be effective when seen from a distance. A high retaining-wall, showing traces of having been covered with frescoed panels, flanks the farther side of the bowling-green. It is prolonged by a grass alley running past the house, the chapel, and the studio to the lower part of the place. Here it ends in a small garden, in front of a large niche that impressively terminates the vista, six hundred feet long, extending the entire length of the grounds.

Through an iron grille opposite the front door of the house is the entrance to a shady enclosure deeply sunk in a cleft of the hillside and looking like an unroofed grotto. Here Baroque influence has been allowed full swing. Spongy lumps of artificial stone veneer the high walls, semblances of stalactites, or frozen icicles, cling to the balusters, and there are niches, tufted with maidenhair fern, sheltering fountains and the naïve statues peculiar to this period. Down the centre extends a long, narrow, box-edged bed filled in spring with many-coloured tulips, and later with masses of annuals.

## THE RENAISSANCE

Two of these divisions contain plantations of gnarled ilexes, set out irregularly and traversed by winding paths as was customary in the Baroque period. The idea was to make the *bosco* a shady wilderness in contrast to the sunny gardens with their straight walks and symmetrical flower-beds.

The oldest garden lies on this terrace above the house. It is enclosed partly by a low parapet, heightened at regular intervals to support stone urns and large flowerpots of terra-cotta, glazed white, and partly by a simple lemon-house and other unpretentious structures. The four compartments composing the parterre have each a central panel framed by narrow borders, a very old form of layout difficult to improve upon. Although the ground is now devoted, for lack of other space, chiefly to vegetables, doubtless it was originally intended for ornamental plants. These are now restricted to flowerpots lining the paths, standing on stone pedestals in the beds or decorating the parapet. In the centre is the usual circular fountain with a stone coping. Opposite the ends of one of the main paths are luxuriant oleanders covered with masses of camellia-like flowers. Above their trunks are round grass seats held in place by retaining walls like those seen in mediæval paintings.

First mentioned in thirteenth-century records

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

*Gamberaia* has since then passed through the hands of several different families. In 1592 it was bought by Giovanni Gamberelli, who probably built the studio, besides greatly improving both house and grounds. Early in the eighteenth century it became one of the estates of the Capponi family, and they added other fountains and statuary. More recently, for many years, it belonged to Princess Ghika, sister of Queen Natalie of Serbia, and to her American friend, Miss Blood, who carefully preserved its ancient loveliness and added the charming water-garden, possibly suggested by those in the Boboli Gardens and at the Villa Lante. The present owner is another American, deeply conscious of her responsibilities as the guardian of a "national monument," as it has been classed by the Italian government.

The stately architecture of the *Villa dei Collazzi* at Tavernuzze, being of far more sophisticated style than the customary constructions by Tuscan architects, and the fact that, when built by Agostino Dino in the sixteenth century, he and Michelangelo were warm friends, led to the attribution of the design to the great sculptor. Now, however, experts accredit the design to Sante di Tito and suggest his having borrowed the idea from plans for a villa at *Marmirolo* made by Michelangelo for Federigo, Marquis



VILLA DEI COLAZZI, NEAR FLORENCE



WELL-HEAD, VILLA MEDICI, CAREGGI

## THE RENAISSANCE

of Mantua, about 1522. As Tito was not born until 1536 this supposition seems to have but slight foundation. It is certainly surprising, on the other hand, that this historical painter, who was comparatively unknown as an architect, should have designed what Mrs. Wharton classifies as "the most splendid and stately villa in the neighbourhood of Florence." In keeping with the tranquil beauty of the widespread Val d'Ema and the lofty Apennines above the horizon, dignity combined with austerity characterize the front elevation of the large house, enclosing three sides of a stone terrace with its walls and arcades. Such details as the proportions of the columns and pilasters are of rare perfection and seemingly only a very skilful architect could have designed the imposing double stairways sweeping in elegant curves before and behind the building. The grounds are planned along still more severely simple lines. On the highroad a walled embrasure, with stone benches flanking a gateway, marks the entrance to a straight avenue of old cypresses leading to an open forecourt in front of the dwelling. At the back below a wide terrace and almost hidden from sight lies an oblong garden devoid of any architectural features worth mentioning.



## CHAPTER VI

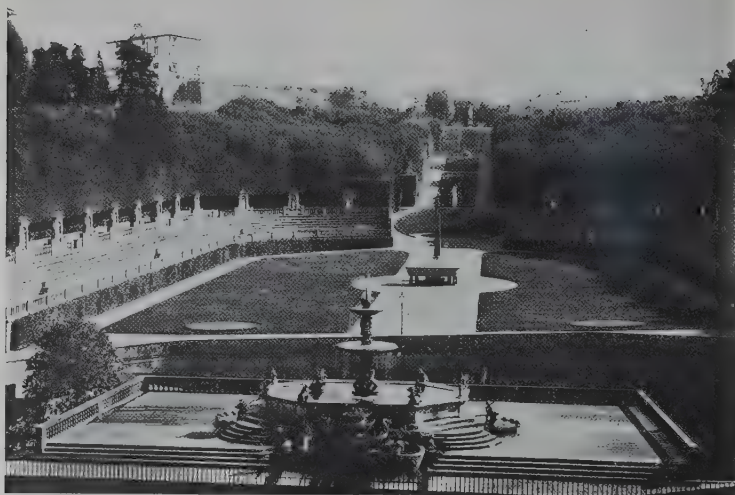
### TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

DURING three wonderful centuries of progress, many interesting events in Italian history took place within the confines of the Medici villas. As their guests came numerous distinguished foreigners, from as far away as Constantinople, whose influence was momentous in art, literature and politics. The warm reception given by Cosimo the Elder to the Greek Emperor John Paleologus, to his brother, the Patriarch, and to the many prelates and scholars in their train, who came to meet Pope Eugenius IV at the Council of Florence, helped greatly to lay the foundation of a new era. A succession of other rulers, statesmen, scholars and artists sojourned in the Medici palaces and villas making them notable centres for the interchange of dynamic ideas that had their effect upon contemporary civilization.

After Cosimo's purchase of *Careggi*, in his rebuilding of the old house and in the additions to the gardens, Renaissance influence becomes clearly apparent as it had not been in his castles—*Trebbio* and



VILLA MEDICI, FIESOLE



AMPHITHEATRE, BOBOLI GARDENS, FLORENCE



PARTERRE AND FOUNTAIN, VILLA REALE, CASTELLO

## TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

*Cafaggiuolo*—surrounded only by ilex woods and farm-lands in the more remote valley of the Mugello. The house retained the covered gallery under the roof suggestive of feudal days but the large windows and pleasant loggias designed by Michelozzo belong to the new era. Cosimo, who had so intimate a knowledge of agriculture “that he could discourse about it as though he had never had any other occupation,” may have planned the walled enclosure containing a variety of exotic plants, a sort of botanic garden then coming into fashion. Towards the close of Cosimo’s life, in the spring of 1459, his sons entertained Galeazzo Maria Sforza here with a banquet and country dance. This young man described the villa to his father, the Duke of Milan, and wrote that he was “no less delighted with the enchanting gardens than with the noble building.”

Whenever Cosimo could withdraw from his busy life in Florence he hastened to spend a few quiet days at *Careggi*, playing chess and pruning the vines shading his peaceful garden. In his old age he wrote to ask his friend Marsilio Ficino to join him here saying, “Yesterday I came to the villa of Careggi not to cultivate my fields but my soul. Come to us, Marsilio, as soon as possible, bringing with you our Plato’s book, *De Summo Bono*. This I suppose you

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

have already translated from the Greek into Latin as you promised. I desire nothing so much as to know the best road to happiness." And not long afterward in August 1464, as Plato was being read aloud to him, Cosimo died at this beloved home.

Each of Cosimo's successors added more or less to the adornment of *Careggi* and spent much time there. After Piero's early death, also in this villa, his son Lorenzo, soon following in his grandfather's footsteps, increased the collection of rare plants. For *Careggi* Lorenzo commissioned Verocchio to cast in bronze the svelte little David, relegated now to the *Bargello*, and the charmingly realistic boy with the dolphin, now in the courtyard of the *Palazzo Vecchio*, meant to stand above a fountain basin amidst the flowers. It was one of Lorenzo's favourite resorts and often on the anniversary of Plato's birthday, he lent it to the Platonic Academy for the banquets and discussions that he so much enjoyed. And here in the hour of death with his scholarly friends, Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola close at hand, he begged for Savonarola's blessing and, kissing his jewelled crucifix, drew his last breath.

For many years the *Villa Medici di Careggi* has been the property of private persons and many of its jewels have disappeared. The botanic garden, the

## TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

maze constructed by Duke Alessandro, and the statues and fountains erected by him and his predecessors are no longer there. Still the pleasant mansion overlooks box-edged flower-beds and a central fountain that partly carry out the design of the original garden.

Apart from its wonderful historical associations the *Villa Medici di Fiesole* would be unforgettable for its outstanding beauty. Cosimo the Elder commissioned Michelozzo, about 1450, to build it for his second son Giovanni, who died before his father, so it was inherited by Cosimo's elder son Piero. It is, however, with Lorenzo the Magnificent that the villa will always be chiefly associated. It clings to a steep hill-side a little below the picturesque town. Vasari describes how securely embedded were the retaining walls that prevented the house and the terraced gardens from slipping down into the valley. "The foundations of the lower part on the steep slope of the hill cost an enormous sum, but it was not thrown away as he made there vaults, cellars, stables, places for the making of wine and oil, and other good and commodious habitations; and above them, besides the bed-chambers, drawing-rooms and other apartments, he arranged rooms for books and music. In short, Michelozzo showed there how valiant an



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

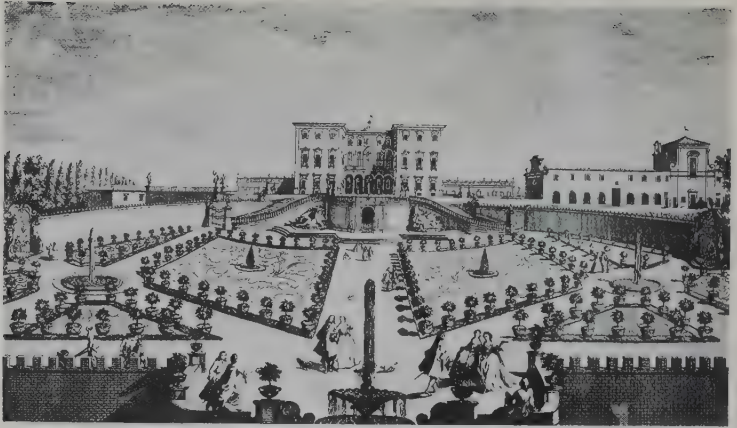
architect he was for it was so well built that, although high up on that hill, no crack ever showed itself in the foundations."

The rather simple mansion praised by Vasari as a "magnificent and noble palace" is entered by passing through a gateway in the wall enclosing the farther end of the forecourt. This enclosure is planted with old trees and contains several architectural features rehabilitated in the Baroque style. Only two stories beneath the widespreading eaves of the low, tiled roof stand above this level but the fall in the ground on the other side of the house makes room for a basement there. On this lower level is a very old garden, with ancient cypresses standing around the raised coping of a central pool, at the intersection of box-edged paths that separate four large flower-beds. A third terrace lies below the forecourt and a few years ago a simple green parterre was added there.

Of all the pleasure gardens belonging to the Medici the Boboli Gardens connected with the Pitti Palace are the largest and the best-known. Originally a farm at Bogole, when the site was inherited by Luca Petti, the rival of Cosimo de Medici, he began to erect the immense palace in 1441 from designs by Brunelleschi. Pitti's descendants sold the palace



GIARDINO DELLE CAVALIERE, BOBOLI GARDENS, FLORENCE



MEDICI VILLA OF LAPEGGI, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY G. ZOCCHI

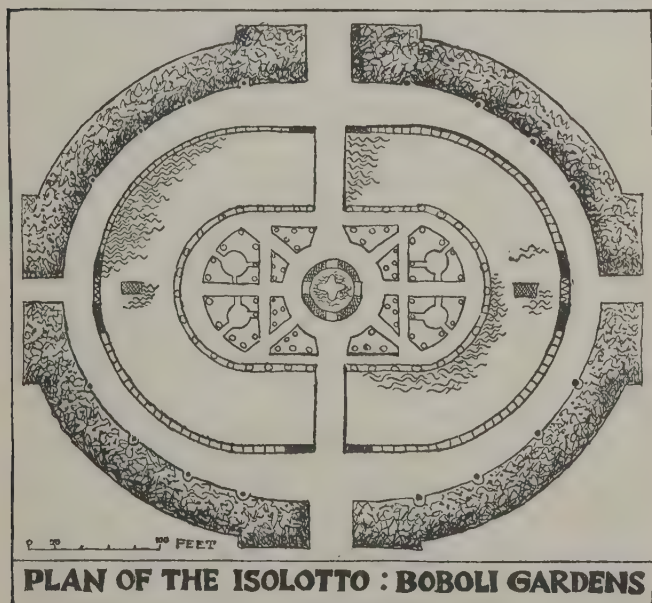


LA REALE VILLA DI PRATOLINO, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY G. ZOCCHI

## TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

and grounds to Cosimo de Medici first Grand-Duke of Tuscany in 1549 and it became the favourite residence of his Spanish wife, Eleanora di Toledo. At this time the hillside behind the palace, previously covered with orchards, was laid as a formal park by Tribolo, whose work was continued by Ammanati, and, many years later, by Buontalenti. Cosimo himself took a great interest in the work and drew some of the plans.

It is rather disappointing to find no flower-gardens



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

anywhere near the palace. The outstanding features are a great amphitheatre at the back of the palace evidently intended for public entertainments, many leafy tunnels of pleached trees and on the lowest part of the grounds an island garden called the *Iso-lotto*. This last section was developed in the middle of the sixteenth century under the direction of Giulio and Alfonso Parigi and they also laid out the broad alley leading down from the Belvedere to the *Iso-lotto*. To this charming balustraded island, surrounded by a miniature oval lake, Cosimo II added Giambologna's statue of Ocean to the central fountain. In 1613 he planned a labyrinth above the avenue and arranged thickets where nets could be laid for catching birds. During the seventeenth century Pietro Leopoldo replaced the magnificent hedge of yew which used to surround the amphitheatre by one of masonry and Cosimo III built the *Casino del Cavaliere* on Michelangelo's rampart and with it connected one of the most charming of secret gardens. The box-edged beds of the parterre are gay with flowers and in the centre stands a well-proportioned fountain-basin with bronze monkeys clambering around the pedestal. At the entrance Pietro Leopoldo, in 1776, employed Zenobi del Rosso to build the round *cafféaus* so-called from a German proto-



## TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

type. Splendid views both from the garden and from this little tower captivated the eye.

There are several grottoes—the most celebrated of them being designed by Ammanati—legions of statues and numerous fountains. It would take several days to examine them all and none are remarkably good according to twentieth century standards.

At Castello, beneath Monte Morello, the *Villa Reale* owes most of its beauty to Cosimo I. At his request Il Tribolo made plans for the grounds, which were never wholly carried out, and designed the elaborate grotto under the massive retaining wall. The not quite rectangular garden lies on an incline ascending to this wall from the back of the long low house. In the centre of the vast parterre stands the Fountain of Hercules with Ammanati's wrestling figures above two superimposed basins. On a higher level stretches a long terrace with a well-planted parterre. At each end is a conservatory once ornamented by bronze birds, that have been mostly transferred to the Bargello. From these shelters the potted orange and lemon trees are brought forth in summer to stand upon their little stone pedestals on either side of the main path. In the background, groups of fine old cypresses and ilex groves heighten the ef-



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

fect of the *bosco* above. Here may still be seen a circular reservoir, centring upon a large statue symbolizing the Apennines attributed to Tribolo, besides vestiges of an old maze mentioned by Vasari. This villa had belonged for several generations to Cosimo's ancestors, descended from the brother of Cosimo the Elder. Giovanni delle Bande Nere had lived here as a boy, then, after his death his widow, Maria Salviati, with her little son Cosimo the future Grand Duke, made Castello their home; and here, a few years after his marriage to Eleanora di Toledo, she died alone.

When Cosimo's second son, Ferdinand, succeeded his brother Francesco as Grand Duke, and was forced to desert his magnificent Roman palace in order to live in Florence, not satisfied with all his inherited estates, he purchased the *Villa Petraja*, at Castello, from the Salutati family. He commissioned Buontalenti to plant rows of trees at each side of the high house and to place the large oblong pool for carp in the centre of the terrace below, with flower-beds at each end. Still lower, a large rectangle of sloping ground was patterned with circles by curving pergolas, and planted with shade-trees, making the incline scarcely perceptible. Later these trees were cut down allowing the slope to become unpleas-

## TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

antly prominent. Perhaps to redeem this defect two mounds, one on either side, were added and planted with rings of ilex trees, now grown to a great size. Midway between the mounds, a raised fountain seems like another attempt to keep the ground from looking as though it was sliding down hill. Among the few interesting features is the fountain with the figure of a woman wringing out her hair, representing Florence and supposed to have been modelled by Il Tribolo. On one end of the terrace stands an ancient ilex tree with a staircase, leading to a platform, high up among the branches, large enough to house the Swiss family Robinson. Here the *Ré Galantuomo* and a certain countess often enjoyed a cosy picnic.

Of the villa built at *Pratolino* by Ferdinand's predecessor, Francesco I, for his second wife the fascinating Bianca Capello, from designs by Buon-talenti and Giambologna, very little survives today. Montaigne, who was there in 1582, saw the colossal figure entitled *L'Appennino* in the making, and was deeply impressed by the elaborate waterworks. He also expressed his admiration for a hothouse and an aviary, besides mentioning a level alley fifty feet wide and five hundred long, with jets of water spouting at regular intervals and a fountain at one end.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

The house has been destroyed and the waterworks were dismantled long ago, but the terrace is still there and Giambologna's gigantic *Appennino* continues to dominate the landscape.

Near Florence on a hill below Arcetri, Cosimo II, the eldest of Ferdinand's sons, and his pleasure-loving wife Maria Maddalena of Austria kept open house at the villa of *Poggio Imperiale*. It was sometimes called the Grand Duchess's villa as it has been altered in 1622 expressly for her benefit by Giulio Parigi. In the forecourt were statues and fountains that disappeared when the villa was turned into a school for girls. From all accounts the gardens never appear to have been of any particular importance. Parigi also built an avenue with a double row of cypresses on each side leading to the ducal residence from the Porta Romana. Many of the fine cypress *viales* near Florence were planted at about this time.

Cosimo will be remembered as the friend of Galileo to whom he gave a tower at Arcetri, not far from *Poggio Imperiale*, called *Il Giojello*. When the astronomer discovered the satellites of Jupiter he called them as a compliment to his patron the *Sidera Medicea*. There is a little garden where in 1638 he may have welcomed his English visitor John Milton.

Besides these villas, numbering seven without

## . TUSCAN VILLAS OF THE MEDICI

counting the castles of *Il Trebbio* and *Cafaggiuolo*, there were various others not apparently containing gardens of especial importance. Among them Buon-talenti designed or made over the *Ambrogiana*, *Marignole* and *la Maggia* in the latter half of the sixteenth century.



## CHAPTER VII

### VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

BESIDES the more important villas created by the Medici many other lesser country seats were scattered throughout Tuscany. In summer almost every prosperous person sought refuge from the heat in a not too distant resort where refreshing breezes cooled the torrid atmosphere and groves or gardens made open-air life attractive. As their fortunes increased wealthy families, like the Strozzi, the Rucellai, the Guicciardini, the Salviati and the Corsini, often had several villas each having its especial advantages at different seasons of the year. On the slopes of Settignano, Fiesole and Bellosguardo and in the broad valley of the Arno picturesque terra-cotta roofs rose above softly tinted walls standing amidst gardens, cypresses and hedgerows.

The typical Tuscan country-house was a square or oblong block built of stone or masonry covered with stucco. A central court and an outside loggia added to its beauty and comfort. The red-tiled roof ended in widespreading eaves that shaded walls varying from tan to yellowish rose-colour. In the



STAIRWAY, VILLA CORSINI, CASTELLO



GARDEN, PALAZZO CORSINI, FLORENCE





VILLA CORSI-SALVIATI, SESTO, NEAR FLORENCE, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY G. ZOCCHI

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

Baroque period rustic architecture lost much of its early simplicity and more elaborate embellishments became the fashion. New mansions in the seventeenth century were ornamented by frames of carved stone around doorways and windows, while blocks of the same material strengthened the corners of the edifice and gabled roofs disappeared behind the curves of a stilted pediment. Many of the old houses and gardens were refashioned along new lines. Simple enclosures were refurbished with grottoes, fountains, and statuary of more fanciful appearance than in the past. Bare walls were enlivened by all kinds of stucco-work and incrustations of many-coloured pebbles and shells. The old was so cunningly blended with the new that many constructions can be ascribed to no one particular period.

The *Villa Corsini*, near the estate once owned by the Medici at Castello, interestingly illustrates the way old houses and their settings were often enlarged and remodelled in the seventeenth century. At the back the severely simple exterior remains untouched, but on the roadside the much ornamented façade, with an elaborately heightened pediment serving as a clock-tower, handsome balustrades, window frames and pilasters, is a seventeenth century innovation designed by Antonio Ferri in a style that is rather

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

overwhelmingly Baroque. An archway opens from the road into a paved courtyard with access through the back of the house to an open space bounded by a balustraded parapet supporting at intervals statuary that would have appealed favourably to the taste of Bernini. A central gateway frames a long vista down a dark alley shaded by rows of old ilex-trees. The walled garden at one end of the house is redeemed from the danger of appearing a little dull and monotonous by another line of balustrading and statuary. At the opposite end of the dwelling lies an ancient grove with several architectural features that are worthy of admiration. The balustraded platform, furnished with tables and curved stone benches and cooled by a fountain, makes a pleasant interlude.

Another seventeenth century garden near Castello is at the *Villa Corsi-Salviati* now belonging to the Guicciardini family. The dull exterior of the palace with its endless walls lining the ugly highway is in decided contrast to the gay garden front surmounted by airy belvederes, balustrades and statuary. At one end the building is finished by a loggia, the interior ornamented by a frescoed landscape, opening through a high archway upon a long lily-pool. The garden lying between the palace and a heavily ornamented wall contains a charming parterre with box-

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

edged beds of luxuriant flowers, fountains and statuary. All is in flourishing condition but fortunately there has been no attempt to modernize its appearance. Beyond the gateway centring on the lily-pool a charming stream flows through a leafy tunnel to the end of the vineyard.

Between Florence and San Domenico, on an eminence above the Mugnone, is the beautiful site of the *Villa Palmieri*, described by Boccaccio as early as the middle of the fourteenth century as having a lovely walled garden. The stately mansion and its extensive grounds represent a gradual evolution of ideas added by successive owners beginning long ago, while the *Villetta*, a small separate establishment recently added to the estate although of uniform style, has been much restored since its erection in the fifteenth century. These transitions, however, have not been marked by any crude or jarring features.

The villa, then known as *Tre Visi*, was bought by Matteo Palmieri in 1454 and afterwards was known by his name. Palmieri, a distinguished scholar and writer, enjoyed the friendship of the elder Cosimo de Medici and of many of the great philosophers and artists of his day. Sandro Botticelli was one of his intimates and painted for his chapel the Assumption of the Virgin, now in the English National Gal-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

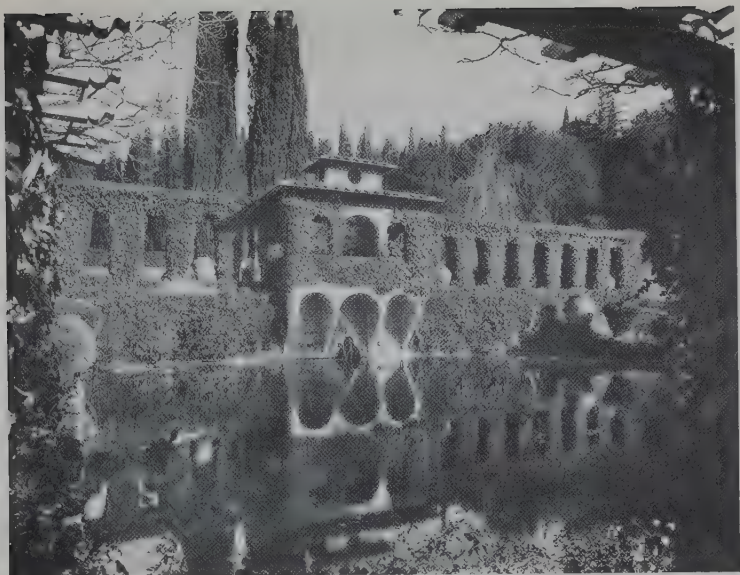
lery, to illustrate Palmieri's poem "La Città di Vita."

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Palmiero Palmieri, a nephew of Matteo, enlarged and altered both house and grounds, adding some of the Baroque ornamentation there today. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century it continued to be a favourite intellectual centre. Later it passed through the hands of the Earl of Cowper, the Countess of Crawford and one or two others before it was acquired by Mr. James Ellsworth and restored by him with scrupulous care. This achievement does the late owner great credit.

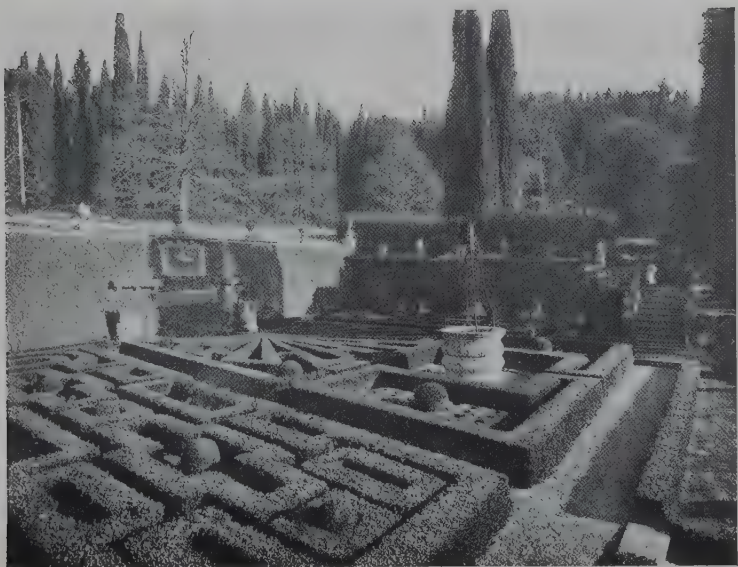
Behind the house, opening from the cortile is a spacious balustraded terrace with graceful statues standing out against the distant landscape where the pinkish dome of the cathedral and its pale slender campanile rise above the battlements of the Palazzo Vecchio and groups of old churches and palaces breaking the level of a plain bounded by the dim blue hills of Arcetri and Bellosguardo. A few large palms cast a pleasant shade on the pavement where relays of potted plants add a touch of colour.

From the terrace two curved ramps lead down to a sunken oval parterre, where the planting is perhaps not wholly in keeping with the plan. If cypresses could replace the palms as accents the improvement





SWIMMING POOL, VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE



BOX-GARDEN, VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE





GARDEN IN FRONT OF THE VILLETTA, VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE



GARDEN BEHIND THE VILLETTA, VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

would be noticeable. Unfortunately the green garden with elaborate patterns outlined in box, the large pool and the arcades of the tennis-court above are all on a different axis from the house. Good as each is in itself these features add nothing to the harmonious development of the grounds.

The *Villetta*, a charming little country-house partly built in the thirteenth century, also owes its restoration to the late James Ellsworth. The plan of both house and grounds is irregular. Inside lies a diminutive cortile, about ten feet wide by eighteen long, though not perfectly rectangular. The brick pavement here, the well-head, ivy-grown walls and wrought ironwork are all in keeping, and produce a charming effect.

In front of the *Villetta* extends a terrace a hundred feet long and a little over twenty wide, laid out with box-bordered beds that form a pretty and rather complicated pattern. There is no attempt to grow flowers except in pots ornamenting the parapet and on the vines trained against the wall of the house. At the rear lies a second enclosure completely concealed from outside by an scalloped wall. This type of coping, finished with a curve, is very characteristic. Here the beds are sufficiently large to include flowers within the box edgings.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Few Florentine villas can boast of so many characteristic attractions as *La Pietra*. To begin with, the site is ideal. It covers a secluded hilltop seemingly remote from other habitations—although it is entered from the Via Bolognese, only a short distance outside the old gates of the city at the Porta Rossa. In every direction there are lovely views of the surrounding country.

Originally a spacious house was erected here, and various gardens were laid out early in the Renaissance. Later, after Cardinal Capponi acquired the country seat, he adapted it, at the close of the seventeenth century, to the requirements of the Baroque style of architecture then in vogue. He built the quaint porter's lodges on each side of the entrance gates which guard the approach to the long straight avenue, between typical rows of tall cypresses, leading to the house. The alterations he made in the exterior of this building—such as the mouldings over the windows—were simple and in good taste, with none of the too sinuous ornamentation often superimposed at this period. Lodges, cypress viale, forecourt, and mansion can be seen in an early eighteenth-century engraving showing that they appeared, then, practically the same as now.

The series of old terraced gardens, leveled from

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

the slope descending behind the house, were wiped out over a century ago to make way for the transformation of the grounds into the semblance of an English Park. The havoc wrought at this period in many Italian villas is incalculable. Fortunately, the present owner of *La Pietra*, a connoisseur with real love and understanding of Italian art, succeeded in finding sufficient traces of the early layout, including the retaining walls, to be able to reconstruct the scheme along the old lines. Additions recently made give no impression of being crude innovations. The whole effect is remarkably harmonious.

Outside the stately drawing-room is a platform with grey stone balustrades and pavement. Attention is attracted to it by effective statues standing on the posts at the top of the stairs and flanking the central doorway. The balustrading in front of this important feature, ending the main axis, is lowered so that the view to and from it may be unimpeded.

From this vantage-point the terraces below form a succession of charming pictures. On the uppermost level the ground is enclosed by a low wall heightened at the back by clipped hedges that throw into relief the statuary. Stone statues and vases alternate a few feet apart on top of the parapet, and dwarf obelisks mark the corners. In the middle of the *rond point*,

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

at the intersection of the widest paths, is a fountain with a circular basin, upheld above a pool that is outlined by a good moulded coping of typical design. Marble benches backed by clipped screens of box emphasize the circle.

This is essentially a green garden, and no other colour counts for anything in the general effect. The lichen-covered stonework and statuary blend with the rest. No flowers brighten the beds. They contain merely plots of grass accented by columnar cypresses, and edged by low hedges of boxwood clipped into balls at the angles. The colouring might seem monotonous were there not so much variety in the forms of the clipped vegetation, casting well-defined shadows and making sharp contrasts of light and shade.

Below this garden is a ramp paved with coloured pebbles and fenced by rose-covered balustrades descending into a large oval enclosure. It, too, is planted almost entirely with evergreens, clipped into different shapes, and contains a fountain-basin in the centre. Shrubs take the place of flowers in the box-edged beds. A peristyle of classic columns bounds the lower side of the oval. On its centre, corresponding to the keystone of an arch, is a niche for a statue standing at the extreme end of the main axis, which is further accentuated by a pair of tall cedars. Such



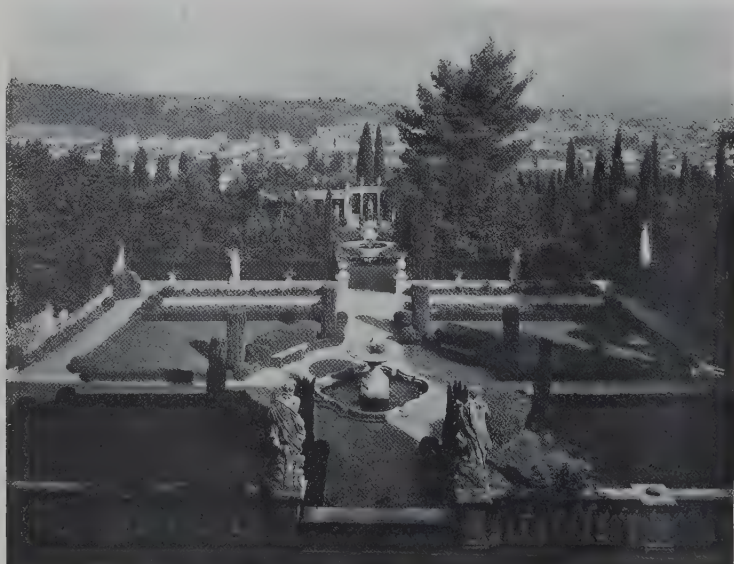


COURTYARD IN THE VILLETTA, VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE





TERRACE, LA PIETRA, FLORENCE



GARDENS, LA PIETRA, FLORENCE

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

trees are often planted by Italian architects to focus the eye upon certain lines that were intended to dominate the design.

Transverse paths running parallel with the hillside lead to other interesting architectural features. Ending one vista is a charming little *temple d'amour*, closing another is an archway built of stone. Fine old trees, hedges, and pergolas diversify the walks. Everywhere are stone vases and statuary—all good of their kind.

No visitor should fail to discover, in an out-of-the-way corner, a charming little open-air theatre. It is enlivened by various gay Venetian figures of carved stone—dancing, making music, and carrying baskets of flowers. Globe evergreens simulate foot-lights. Screens of evergreen form the wings. All is on a miniature scale.

At the two ends of the house are other interesting gardens. On the west are new ones laid out in the style of the Renaissance and ornamented with still more statuary. Nowhere is there a better spot than *La Pietra* to study different examples of garden statuary, vases, balustrades, and other forms of carved stone.

An old walled garden, bounded on one side by the eastern end of the house, was also redecorated

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

and enlarged by Cardinal Capponi. The walls enclosing two of the remaining sides, divided into panels by pilasters, were incrustated with bands of rusticated stonework. Marble busts and urns were placed on top of the posts, the gateways were elaborately redecorated, and ornate wrought-iron grilles replaced those designed along simpler lines. On the eastern boundary the lemon-house—without which no Italian garden would be considered complete—was veneered with a mosaic of many-coloured shells and pebbles, laid in intricate patterns, and forming niches for busts, no longer there. The layout of the ground might well belong to an earlier date. It is divided into quarters edged by a low stone coping. In the centre is a fountain and benches. The beds, slightly raised above the paths, are planted with ancient espaliers and standard fruit trees, with a sprinkling of unpretentious flowers that have a pleasingly rustic and home-like appearance.

After reading a glowing description of the romantic atmosphere pervading the once deserted *Villa Bellosguardo*, long known by the name of *Campi*, one is shocked to go there now and see how it was cursed by Caruso's shower of gold. His "restoration" gave the seventeenth century pleasure grounds, at Signa above the Arno, a strange resemblance to pre-

## VILLAS AROUND FLORENCE

tentious estates of the newly-rich on the Hudson river, while the twin houses, not comparable with those at the *Villa Lante*, to all appearances might have been built yesterday. Old gods and goddesses, who had been slumbering peacefully for ages past, beside murky pools or in mysterious woodlands, sadly awoke to find everything being put into painfully good order without a particle of sympathy for romantic decadence. The poor statues were allowed to remain looking very unhappy and out of place, with no protecting tangle of shrubbery or other becoming disarray to mantle their infirmities. Fortunately, the great singer spared some fine old trees and did nothing to destroy the wonderful view over the river valley. Now new owners have come from northern Italy to live here, and it is to be hoped that, even if they do not spend less money, they will show more kindly sentiment for the past.



## CHAPTER VIII

### NEAR LUCCA

THE quaint walled town of Lucca, about fifty miles from Florence, and much nearer to Pisa, is one of the most convenient centres for the exploration of simple seventeenth and eighteenth-century villas. During the early part of the Renaissance, when the warfare between the Republic of Lucca and her neighbours was almost incessant and while foreign invaders traversed the outlying country on their way south, there could have been little security for life or property outside the walls of the town. After the Republic destroyed the massive castles of the nobles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for many years these strongholds were replaced merely by hunting-lodges. However, Montaigne, who tarried in Lucca on his Italian journey in 1581, praises the country-seats with attractive houses, gardens ornamented by fountains and grottoes, besides thickets of evergreens planted as snares for birds. He writes of a pleasant excursion: "We rode into the country with some gentlemen of Lucca who lent us horses. All round about I saw quantities of delightful villas for the distance of





GARDEN OF FLORA, VILLA TORREGIANI, CAMIGLIANO





POOL, VILLA BERNARDINI, SALTOCCHIO



POOL, VILLA MANSI, SEGROMIGNO

## NEAR LUCCA

three or four miles with porticos and loggias, which add greatly to their beauty."

Most of the old places on the wooded hills surrounding the town remain still in the possession of the descendants of their original owners or of their compatriots, and there has been no influx of foreigners to take away from the old-world atmosphere. All the especially interesting villas are described in a local guidebook, printed in 1820, and can be visited in a single day, should the traveller be pressed for time. For good measure the *Villa Garzoni*, at Collodi nearer Pescia, described in a later chapter, might be added to the number.

Driving from the town in the direction of Pistoja, but leaving the main road very shortly, it is only a few miles to the *Villa Torregiani*, on the outskirts of the village of Camigliano. The large and imposing mansion, with its unusual ornamentation, was built by a member of the Santini family in the seventeenth century. It was inherited by the Marchesa Torregiani, born a Santini, early in the eighteenth century, who replanted the grounds directly adjoining the house with trees and turf in the English style then so fashionable. Only two circular fountain-basins embedded in the front lawn and the long cypress avenue, leading from a distance to the central gateway, sug-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

gest that the original layout was probably more formal.

Fortunately, the quaint "Garden of Flora," so sunken below the lawn as to be invisible from the house, though but a stone's throw from its windows, retains all its early charm. High walls on every side enhance its privacy. Against them are raised flower-borders like those depicted in mediæval illuminations. At one end is a curious stone pavilion sheltering a grotto that centres on the main axis. Here lie concealed a great variety of surprise waterworks. Streams rain from the ceiling and gush from the floor, while a curtain of spray can be made to cover the doorway if the drenched stranger tires of the joke and tries to escape. Hidden springs also spout water from the staircase ascending to the roof, and again play mischievously up there. At the opposite end a double stairway adorns the retaining wall and conceals a subterranean passageway leading to the house. Beyond the parapet, above the steps, on a higher level, stretches an oblong pool ornamented by statues and reflecting a group of tall dark cypresses. Even in winter, when the oblong beds accented by standard shrubs and trees are bare of flowers, the Garden of Flora is a pleasant place to linger, though during summer, with the plants

## NEAR LUCCA

blooming gaily, it is still more enchanting. Architecturally considered perhaps the most attractive feature is the casino standing just outside the garden and helping to circumscribe the enclosure. Appended to this building is a small lemon-house, opening through arched doorways into a parterre of roses.

Not far from Camigliano is Segromigno; here, close together, are two villas. Of these the more interesting to the garden-lover is the *Villa Mansi*. At a distance below the dignified mansion, lies a miniature lake, surrounded by a balustrade, with statues standing at intervals on the posts. All about rises an immense screen of superb trees almost producing the effect of a forest. In this woodland glade there is also half concealed a rustic pool where a marble Diana and her attendant nymphs disport themselves in the dusky water. Nearer the house is an interesting and unusual casino. The adjacent *Villa Mazzarosa* is shaded by fine trees, but is comparatively modern and contains no gardens of particular importance. On the upper hillside stands a small, round, walled temple built, in 1830, by the Marchese Antonio Mazzarosa, the historian, who made the villa a centre for his literary friends.

Next in order might be taken the *Villa Reale* at Marlia, interesting for its historical associations as

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

well as for its unusual beauty. Here a dense forest, girt about by insurmountable walls, creates a dark setting in sharp contrast to the sunny open spaces devoted to gardens and to architectural structures. These features, their contours softened and mellowed by time, are so concealed from outside observation that they form a series of delightful surprises. The unfrequented woodland provides an enchanting sanctuary for birds. Songs of nightingales, hidden amid leafy bowers, rise above the murmur of living waters flowing into silent murky pools.

Marlia, halfway between Segromigno and Saltocchio is but a small hamlet. It derives its name not, as Baedeker would have us believe, from any far-fetched resemblance to the dull and grandiose Château of Marly, beloved by Louis XIV, but from *marrilla*, meaning a small lake. In records dating as far back as the ninth century there is mention of this place. Early in the fourteenth century, the noble Orsetti family possessed a villa here. Stefano Orsetti fought against the Turks and brought back as a trophy some horses' tails that are commemorated by an inscription in the cathedral at Lucca. For many successive generations the heads of the family were known as the Paladins of Marlia, and did much to improve this estate. In their time it became one of





THÉÂTRE D'EAU, VILLA REALE, MARLIA



THÉÂTRE, VILLA REALE, MARLIA



GATEWAY, VILLA REALE, MARLIA

## NEAR LUCCA

those intellectual and artistic centres that aroused fresh enthusiasms during the Renaissance. There was more than one patron of art and literature who enjoyed playing the part of Mæcenas in this neighbourhood. Several of them are described by Count Cesare Sardi in an interesting book which is entitled *Dei Mecanati Lucchese nel Secolo XIV*.

In this wonderful period the Orsetti began to alter the gardens, and to them we owe the oldest ones that exist today, dating to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In front of the palace and near the main entrance to the grounds is an exceptionally interesting *théâtre d'eau*. It is backed by a dense semi-circle of clipped ilex trees above which rise the misty outlines of beautiful mountains. In the centre is a curious grotto covering a water-stairway. Marble statues and vases stand out against the background of evergreens. Below them streams of water tumble into basins attached to a rustic retaining wall and overflow into a large semi-circular pool.

Other formal enclosures are not on an axis of the palace, but lie concealed in the woodland. First comes the lemon-garden, doubly screened by hedges and by outside ilexes trimmed to form a high wall. Much of the area is covered by a large pool guarded by well-proportioned stone balustrades. Terra-cotta

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

pots, filled with brightly coloured geraniums and small flowering shrubs, stand at intervals on the railing to break up its straight lines. At one end there is an opening flanked on either side by a reclining river-god, one representing the Arno and the other the Serchio. Behind them is a Baroque structure, all curves and spongy stone-work, yet not too redundant to be pleasing to eyes that have been opened to the charm of this style of garden-architecture. Under an archway in the central niche is a statue of Leda and her attendant swan.

Passing through gates hung between posts decorated by pilasters built of large blocks of rusticated stone alternating with other smaller and smoother ones, on the farther side of the lemon garden we come into a circle enclosed by high hedges. In the centre is the basin of a fountain that throws a plumelike jet of water high into the air. This little antechamber serves merely as the connecting link between the two larger enclosures.

Next, we enter a fascinating little out-of-door theatre, built late in the seventeenth century and a most precious relic of the past. Fortunately, it is in a perfect state of preservation. The semicircular auditorium, about forty-two feet wide, is sunk nearly four feet below the level of the stage. Around the floor,

## NEAR LUCCA

carpeted with grass, are ranged rising tiers of turf edged with stone flagging, to seat the spectators. The background of the stage and the wings at the sides are of compact yew closely clipped. The auditorium is also hemmed in by evergreen walls pierced with apertures for doors and windows. Silhouetted against this green background, on the stage and in the niches at either side, still stand quaint statues, possibly of Venetian origin, impersonating Arlecchino, Colombina, Notaro, Pantaleone, and Pulcinella, the characters perpetually appearing in the early Italian farces and puppet shows. Plays and pageants were a favourite form of diversion for the guests at a country-seat. It is easy to imagine that many of Goldoni's vivacious comedies, accurately portraying the gayeties of high life in the eighteenth century, may have been enacted on this small stage.

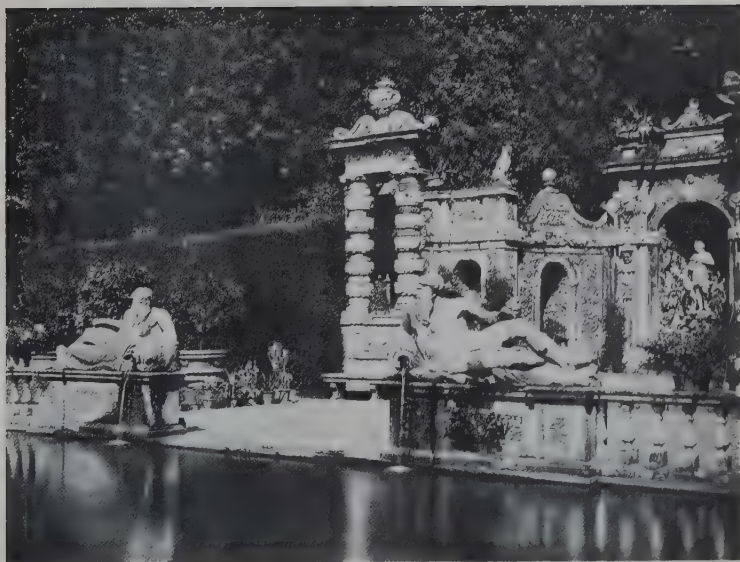
Early in the nineteenth century the Orsetti family became extinct, and Marlia, after being their home for five hundred years, passed into the hands of the newly created Prince and Princess of Lucca and Piombino. The Princess, born Elisa Bonaparte, was an enterprising sister of the great Napoleon, who was fond of giving thrones to his near relatives and whose armies had recently increased such opportunities by conquering northern Italy. During Elisa's



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

tenure of the estate it, therefore, became a royal residence, and ever since then has been called the *Villa Reale*. In many respects she resembled her brother: like him she loved splendour, and displayed great executive ability. Soon she expended more than half a million francs upon the embellishment of the villa, aided by the architects Bienaimé and Lazzarini. They built the Palladian-looking guard-houses on each side of what was then the entrance to the grounds, and transformed the Orsettis' modest birth-place into a princely palace. The interior was re-decorated in the Empire style. Frescoes were added to the walls and ceilings, and pictures were contributed by Agostino Tosanelli, celebrated as the Italian prototype of his famous French contemporary, Prud'hon. The decoration of the dining-room is especially interesting, partly because a similar method of painting counterfeit mouldings, panels, and other structural details inside a house was imitated in England and is now being revived by leading American architects, in the reproductions of late Georgian architecture that are coming into fashion throughout the north-eastern section of the United States.

The changes in the grounds were not so far-reaching. Elisa did, however, sweep away some of the old gardens to make room for *plâtre-bandes* in the



WATER-GARDEN, VILLA REALE, MARLIA



NICHE IN THE WATER-GARDEN, VILLA REALE, MARLIA

## NEAR LUCCA

French style near the house, and for an open stretch of grass beyond. The outskirts of the lawn were planted with rare trees and shrubs, evidently grouped in the English fashion then so much the rage.

At the close of the brief French régime the Congress of Vienna gave the Duchy of Lucca to Carlo Ludovico, one of the Bourbons formerly Dukes of Parma. His mother, Maria Luisa, acted as regent during his minority. The *Villa Reale* was one of their favourite residences. The *Guida del Forestiere per la Città e il Contado di Lucca*, printed in 1820 and dedicated to Maria Luisa, described the appearance of the palace and the grounds in her day and some of the changes in progress there. After depicting the sheltered location on the side of a foothill below the Apennines, and the park and gardens enlivened by copious supplies of water derived from the rapidly flowing Fraga, the author ends by praising two buildings, then being constructed, "that will make the villa truly magnificent. The first is an astronomical observatory designed in the form of a little temple dedicated to Urania, ornamented with columns, statues, and bas-reliefs, sixty-one cubits in length and flanked by two wings, one intended for the library and the other for the Queen's study. The second building is a hothouse constructed according to an admirable

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

design, to which will be joined, under the name of a Coffee house, a most elegant Casino with spacious rooms prepared to answer the purposes of a ball. The architect in charge of both these buildings is the distinguished Signor Lorenzo Nottolini."

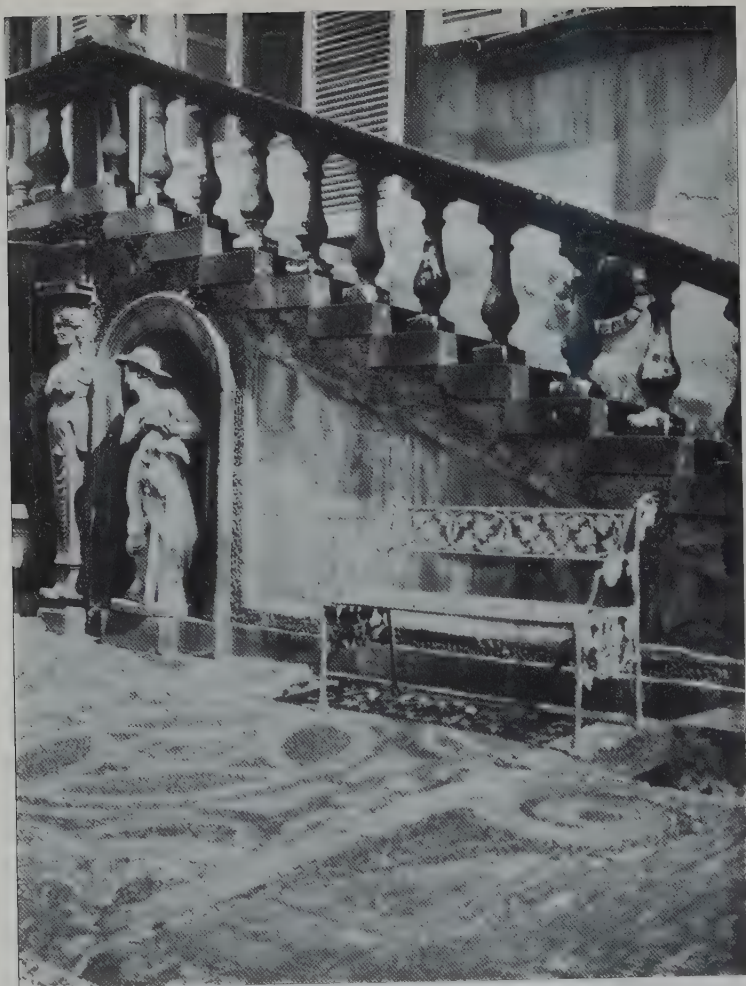
After the unification of Italy and the abdication of the Bourbons, in the north as well as in Naples, the *Villa Reale* became the property of the kings belonging to the house of Savoy. They lent it for three generations to members of the disinherited Spanish Bourbons of Naples: first to the widow of the Prince of Capua, later to her son and other direct descendants of the last King of Naples. Until 1920 some of them were still living there, and then for the second time in many hundreds of years it passed to strangers.

Fortunately, only a brief interval occurred before the estate was acquired by Countess Pecci Blunt, a niece of Pope Leo XIII. She and her husband, with the assistance of the distinguished French landscape architect, M. Gréber, are restoring the part of the grounds that was injured just before the villa fell into their hands, and are wisely refurnishing the palace in keeping with the Empire frescoes on the walls and ceilings. Their immediate predecessors took no liberties with the gardens which are held sacred





POOL, VILLA BERNARDINI, SALTOCCHIO



STAIRWAY, VILLA BERNARDINI, SALTOCCHIO

## NEAR LUCCA

as being in the category of "national monuments."

This little tour around Lucca must not be ended without a visit to the *Villa Bernardini* at Saltocchio. The formal arrangement of the grounds near the spacious mansion has almost disappeared, though once the design must have been good. Half hidden by huge tunneled hedges below the dwelling lies a lovely old sunken water-garden, connected by admirable stone flights of stairs, ornamented by balustrades, with an upper platform where a fountain casts its spray into the air. The fine alleys of broad-leaved evergreens are kept carefully clipped, but the grounds have an almost deserted appearance and no flowers are cultivated except in a tiny walled garden near a small chapel.



## CHAPTER IX

### VILLAS NEAR SIENA AND PERUGIA

ALTHOUGH only twenty-five or thirty miles apart, the hill-top town of Siena bears little resemblance to its Florentine rival on the Arno. Sienese art and architecture have a mediæval appearance, while Florence belongs to a later era. This difference is also somewhat apparent in the architecture of the country-seats outside Siena, though more difficult to define.

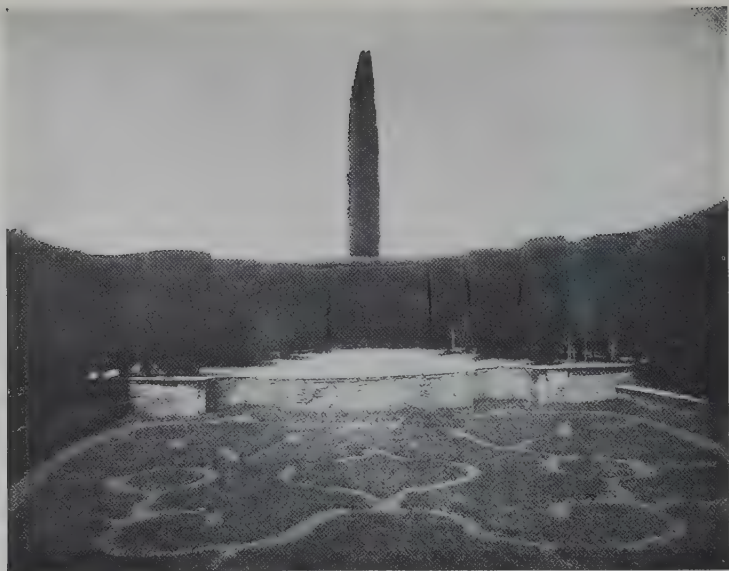
Of the Renaissance villas near Siena the largest and most complete is *Vicobello*. This property belonged in the sixteenth century, as it does at present, to the noble and distinguished Chigi family. Tradition affirms that they engaged the famous Sienese architect Baldassare Peruzzi, who had enlarged and transformed the castle at *Belcaro*, to design a new country-house and pleasure grounds for their *villegiatura* on a hill southeast of the town. Peruzzi was a painter as well as a disciple of Bramante in architecture, his best known work being perhaps the *Palazzo Massimi alle Colonne* at Rome.

*Vicobello* is primarily a farm judging from the



NICHE IN GARDEN, VICOBELLO, NEAR SIENA





OPEN-AIR THEATRE, VILLA GORI, NEAR SIENA



ILEX TUNNEL, VILLA GORI, NEAR SIENA

## VILLAS NEAR SIENA AND PERUGIA

collection of buildings facing each other around the forecourt. The owner's unpretentious dwelling covers less ground than the quarters for the superintendent, the farm-hands, and horses, not to mention the spacious tool-house adjoining the chapel. Even the charmingly designed well-head is evidently intended to serve practical purposes. A fine stone gateway in the forecourt marks the entrance to an old flowery orchard. Clipped box hedges of unusual height, following the outlines of a long straight path, accent a vista boldly terminating in an exceptionally attractive niche, surmounted by a pediment below an escutcheon quaintly overshadowed by a cardinal's hat. An irregular grouping of dark tapering cypresses back of the niche heightens its impressiveness. On either side of the walks, dividing the space into sixteen large beds, gnarled fruit-trees cast pleasant shadows over the flowers and link the pleasure-grounds to the farm.

Four terraces on lower levels contain box-edged flower-beds and a few interesting old architectural features. The recent intrusion of some spongy stonework is an innovation that even an ardent lover of the Baroque style might deplore. From the lowest terrace, beneath the widespreading branches of some fine old trees, is a superb view of the peaceful valley.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Another estate belonging to the Marchese Chigi, but west of the town, is the *Villa Cetinale*, a delightful expression of the Baroque style. The simple but charming house is supposed to have been made over by Carlo Fontana in 1680. Some flower-beds lying on each side of the short driveway leading from the high-road to the dwelling are the only attempt at a garden, but the chief interest lies in the plan of the grounds at the north. Here, a wide grass walk beginning on a terrace next the house continues first between a long stretch of farm-lands, then through a clearing, in a romantic woodland upon a steep hill-side, to a quaint hermitage at the end of this unusually protracted vista.

Not far from *Vicobello* is *La Palazzina*, sometime called the *Villa Gori*. The immediate surroundings of the unaffectedly simple seventeenth century mansion, standing close beside the road, have been much neglected and if ever a garden was there, no trace of it remains today. An old well-head, with a wrought-iron superstructure, is the sole architectural accessory to be seen now. Opposite the centre of the loggia, on the side of the house where a garden might have been appropriately placed, is a gateway opening into a long tunnel over-arched by ilexes, that have been pleached and clipped into shape for hundreds

## VILLAS NEAR SIENA AND PERUGIA

of years, to judge from their gnarled and twisted trunks. This pleached alley leads down the hillside through olive plantations to a knoll where dwarfed shrubs have been arranged to lend themselves to forming snares for luring birds to destruction. Shrubberies set apart for this unpleasing sport still frequently exist and are shown on many old villa plans.

A much more attractive objective terminates a second long ilex tunnel, also starting from near the house. Here the visitor emerges in a charming little open-air theatre with tiers of raised seats forming a horseshoe around a parquet carpeted with grass patterned by ribbon-paths of gravel that, sad to say, are fast being allowed to disappear. The stage, two or three feet above the level of the ground and faced by a stone retaining wall, has four wings of clipped cypress on each side and a screen of similar substance at the back accented by a single tall tapering tree. Outer hedges of clipped ilex form concealed corridors.

On the road to Florence, a little way outside the *Porta Camollia* stands another of these enchanting little theatres, screened with evergreens, at the *Villa Sergardi*. It is placed on the same axis as the central doors of the house, producing a charming effect when they stand open. There is a simple parterre but the

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

rest of the grounds have the appearance of a park. The *Villa Bargagli-Pogarello*, also on the Via Fiorentina, is marked by an interesting gateway at the main entrance, and, since it is near the *Villa Mischatelli* on the Via Marciano, might repay a brief inspection.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Perugia there are no gardens of importance unless the *Giardino di Fronte* may be so considered. Gabriel Faure has glowingly described the way it projects from the end of the town above the plain like the prow of a ship over the sea. From the circular stone exedra there is a marvellous view of the great Umbrian plain with the white walls of Assisi standing out clearly while Spello is barely distinguishable in the distance.

Several miles away, rises the *Villa di Colle al Cardinale* on an eminence, off the beaten track, in a pretty section of the country. The large house and the formal part of the grounds do not appear to be older than the eighteenth century. Around two sides of the sunken garden, the perforated terracotta fence, affording sufficient protection, yet, not keeping out the air, produces a charming effect. Overlooking one corner, stands a little octagonal building, used for a library, attractive both without and within. The room it contains is chiefly furnished by a large, round





NICHE, COLLE AL CARDINALE



LIBRARY, COLLE AL CARDINALE



GARDEN, COLLE AL CARDINALE, NEAR PERUGIA



GARDEN, COLLEGIO ROSA, SPELLO

## VILLAS NEAR SIENA AND PERUGIA

table suggesting that perhaps this was originally intended for a coffee-house. Several statues and fountains ornament this garden and the adjoining terraces. In the opposite direction from the house lies a wooded park and some shrubbery, but very little remains of the original formal planting except some superb cypresses.

At Spello, the *Collegio Rosa* has an interesting series of gardens that do not belong wholly to any one period. The oldest part is a long terrace, with large beds down the centre that were for hundreds of years devoted to vegetables. At intervals the outer parapet is broken by balustraded niches, flanked by effective stone posts, corresponding to alcoves containing cisterns on the inside retaining wall, which is also thrown into shadow by a succession of smaller niches. The beds are edged with box clipped at frequent intervals into the shape of balls. The remainder of the pleasure grounds, on a slant that cuts them off almost completely from the casino, were laid out by the Piermarini in the eighteenth century. As an expression of Baroque exuberance the plan is extremely interesting. All the lines either slant or curve in unexpected ways. Starting at the top with a wall resembling the end of a pavilion, given depth by a striking central alcove and pilasters, the several terraces

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

increase in size as they descend the hill. On the lowest level double rows of cypresses on either side give the effect of a wide grass avenue, while box edging in the shape of gigantic spurs makes a raised pattern on the turf. For an almost triangular plot the arrangement is very effective.



## CHAPTER X

### THREE GREAT VILLAS

DIFFERENT as they are in many ways, the *Villa Farnese* at Caprarola, the *Villa Lante* at Bagnaia and the *Villa d' Este* at Tivoli, stand apart in a class of their own. Each is of incomparable beauty. Not to have seen them means not to know the magnificent possibilities of garden-design at its best, when love of beauty and the almost unlimited funds of a rich patron gave free rein to the imagination of a genius and permitted him to translate visions of paradise into trees, flowers, stone and water within the compass of a few acres of ground. As sources of inspiration the influence of these villas has been immeasurable. And yet to attempt wholly to copy the simplest of the three today would be beyond the wildest dreams of the most reckless millionaire.

Vignola, who built both the *Villa Farnese* and the *Villa Lante*, could have safely rested his fame on these achievements. Born early in the sixteenth century, he was the contemporary of Palladio and fourteen years younger than Pirro Ligorio. His measured



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

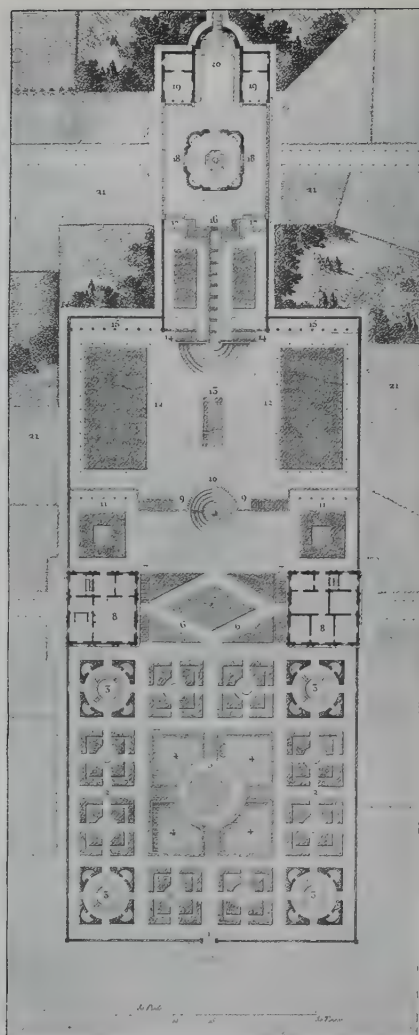
drawing of the "Orders of Architecture," showing his wonderful sense of scale and proportion, are still highly valued by art students. As a garden-architect he has remained for centuries unrivalled.

Ligorio designed the *Villa d'Este* besides the charming Casino of Pope Pius IV in the Vatican Gardens. Both plainly show that he was an antiquary and a sculptor as well as an architect. He was also widely known as the author of "An Attempt to Restore Ancient Rome" and "The Restoration of Hadrian's Villa."

The dreamlike beauty of the *Villa Lante* goes far to prove the contention that Vignola was the greatest of garden architects. This harmony of soft greys and greens, bound together by shimmering aigrettes and moving chains of silver framed by delicately carved walls and balustrades, shows a deep understanding of the rhythmic charm of rippling water, of light contrasted with shade, and of enduring stone as a foil to the evanescent loveliness of flowers and foliage. A logical sequence of ideas finds expression in the design. Planned primarily as a pleasure ground, the casinos are so placed as not to interfere with the broad central vista accented by the waterway and backed on each side by shady groves of ilexes and plane-trees.



PARTERRE FROM TERRACE, VILLA LANTE, BAGNAIA



*From an engraving by Percier and Fontaine*  
**PLAN OF VILLA LANTE, BAGNAIA**

### THREE GREAT VILLAS

In the sixteenth century the quaint little town of Bagnaia, as well as the outlying hillside, belonged to the See of Viterbo. Soon after Cardinal Gambara became Bishop of Viterbo, Pius V gave him permission to build a villa on this eminence. The Cardinal called upon Vignola to draw some plans suitable for his domain and to supervise their execution. He divided the formal pleasure-ground into a series of platforms alternating with slopes, starting from a large square flower garden at the bottom, to be overlooked by twin casinos, and ending with a grotto, flanked by twin pavilions, placed in the highest of the successive walled enclosures. He planned that water should gush from a conventionalized cliff, fall into an *abreuvoir*, arise again and again in fountains and flow downwards in rivulets and cascades until it should lie at rest in a miniature formal lake, beneath a monumental fountain in the centre of the flower garden on the lowest level. When only one of the casinos was completed, and the gardens still required many finishing touches, a new Pope, Gregory XIII, hearing reports of the immense cost of the construction, sent Cardinal Carlo Borromeo to look into this extravagance. The saintly Borromeo, who did not fear to rebuke Cardinal Farnese for his lavish expenditure at Caprarola, suggested to Cardinal Gam-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

bara that perhaps his money could be better spent in almsgiving. This broad hint could not be ignored and the construction of the villa ceased while the Cardinal diverted his funds towards the building of a hospital and other good works. Fortunately, however, when Cardinal Montalto succeeded to the bishopric, he erected the second casino and continued the execution of the original scheme. He also added the three bronze-like stone figures upholding three mounts, the Montalto emblem, in the centre of the quadrilateral lake.

All the architectural accessories will repay careful study. The two stone summer-houses, designed for Cardinal Gambara as they display the crab forming part of his coat of arms, standing under the shade of some ancient plane-trees far above the casinos, are perfect in their proportions and in the finished elegance of their details. The carving on the retaining walls, the balustrades and stone vases, not to mention many other interesting features, are all perfect of their kind.

Outside the gardens there is one of the earliest parks formed with straight paths, through the woods, meeting in an occasional *rond point*, marked by a fountain. The old maps also show several pavilions



### THREE GREAT VILLAS

and a maze. Down near the gardener's house at the entrance is a large oval pool, guarded at the front by a balustrade, and at the back by a high retaining wall surmounted by another balustrade. In the centre of the water stand a winged horse and some curious figures.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century the *Villa Lante* was filled with gaiety. The charming French Duchess, sister of the Princesse des Ursins, knew how to entertain delightfully. The gardens were the scene of play-acting, rope-dancing and musicales without number. When Cardinal d'Estrées and his suite came there for a visit rope-dancing was mentioned as the chief event.

Caprarola, a few miles from Viterbo, formed at one time part of the property of the mighty Orsini family who owned much of this district. Their castles crowned Bracciano, Bomarzo and other neighbouring hill-towns. It was because of their wealth and power that Piero de Medici had arranged to have his son Lorenzo, known as the Magnificent, marry the rather unattractive and narrow-minded Clarice Orsini. From the Orsini some land at Caprarola was bought by the first Cardinal Farnese and he probably employed Peruzzi to build a castle there.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

The Farnese had dwelt in comparative obscurity for centuries at Orvieto not far from Viterbo, until the beautiful Giulia excited the admiration of Pope Alexander VI, a wealthy Spanish Borgia, who enriched her brothers as well as the children she bore to him. Giulia Farnese had married one of the Orsini family and was to have been buried in their small Chapel at Bomarzo, possibly designed by Vignola. Alessandro Farnese, a brother of Giulia, who received a cardinal's hat among other gifts from the Pope, and later, in 1534, was crowned with the papal tiara as Paul III, firmly established the wealth and power of his relatives. He gave his illegitimate son Pierluigi property at Castro, Frascati, Montalto and many other places. Finally Pierluigi was murdered at Piacenza by the Marquis Anguissola with the connivance of Admiral Andrea Doria.

Alessandro, one of the sons of the murdered man, when only fourteen years old was made a cardinal by his grandfather, another son married Margaret, illegitimate daughter of the Emperor Charles V, while the third married an illegitimate daughter of Henry II of France. With all these regal connections and being himself a man of brilliant parts, it is no wonder that Cardinal Alessandro II gathered about him in his superb Roman palace, and at his stately country-



PAVILION, VILLA LANTE, BAGNAIA



CARYATIDES, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA

### THREE GREAT VILLAS

seat, a group of brilliant and distinguished people. Cardinal Bembo, Vasari and Castiglione were among his guests.

When, in the middle of the sixteenth century, this second Cardinal Alessandro acquired the hillside above Caprarola he commissioned Vignola to build a palace for him there in the guise of a mediæval castle. This five-sided building, surrounded by a moat, is sometimes considered the architect's greatest achievement, although the style was inappropriate to its era.

On the walls of the state apartments in the palace are frescoes by the Zuccari brothers celebrating glorious incidents in the history of the Farnese family and maps of the towns in their possession, including Parma, Piacenza, Ronciglione and many others. At the back of the building the windows overlook the lower part of the pleasure grounds.

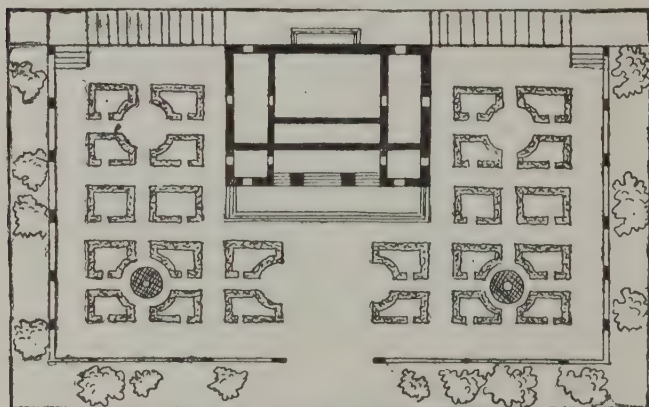
This section, reached by little bridges spanning the moat and guarded by stately stone caryatides heroic in size, consists of two large walled squares. Each enclosed an elaborate parterre divided by broad cross-paths into quarters that centered on statuary. Between these not particularly interesting squares, extending diagonally in two different directions, there was formerly a much smaller enclosure



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

that may have been intended for a secret garden.

Beyond the left-hand square, now overshadowed by dense ilexes, is the approach through an avenue of spindly larches to the really delightful part of the pleasure grounds on a higher eminence. The link between the two sections is unfortunately so thin and poor that it greatly weakens this part of the plan.



CASINO GARDEN, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA

The formal grounds, on the upper slope, are grouped around a charming casino with airy arcades supported by slender columns. It seems particularly delightful in contrast to the massive structure inside the moat. The casino overlooks an enchanting secret garden which has retained all of its original



### THREE GREAT VILLAS

charm. Around the high box-edging of the parterre, with its equine fountains, on low parapets of soft, grey, lichen-mottled stone, against the dark shadows of a mysterious woodland, arise a strange company of pagan demi-gods, bearing stone vases upon their heads, beneath slender cypresses and bold umbrella pines. At twilight, when the mystery deepens, with the wind rustling through the pines and the pleasant murmur of running water soothing the senses, this is indeed a garden of the gods fit to stir the imagination of a poet.

Above the casino, and opening from its charming arcaded loggia, is a broad grass terrace ornamented by the Lily Fountain and two lesser basins throwing aloft jets of water. The highest stretch of ground is interestingly laid out on three different levels at each side of a broad grass alley leading to a handsome circular gateway. These levels are defined by parapets combined with little fountains. Originally, the water spurted up from eighteen vases and fell into small mural basins, producing a charming effect. Each section was divided into twenty small beds, making altogether a hundred and twenty of these subdivisions, which, according to an old plan, were intended to be filled with flowers.

Above the boundless stretch of the Campagna,

standing out against a steep hillside where tapering glanaches of ancient cypress darken gleaming sheets of water and crumbling staccato walls, the proud *Villa d'Este*, in its decadence, suggests the sombre beauty of a funeral march. The passage of many centuries has softened hard outlines and effaced superfluous embellishments without injuring the inherent grandeur of the original conception. It is still a superb creation magnificently embodying that phase of architecture when the late Renaissance begins to become merged in the Baroque.

This most famous of princely villas near Rome, at a summer resort celebrated by the classic writers of antiquity, owes its existence to the architectural genius of Pirro Ligorio and to the initiative of the polished Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, son of the art-loving Duke of Ferrara and his wife Lucrezia Borgia. After Cardinal d'Este was made Governor of Tivoli by the Farnese Pope, Paul III, he acquired the site for a villa, destroyed the castle there, and started to erect a palace large enough to house his numerous retinue including two hundred and fifty nobleman. Never finished and with little to recommend it in detail from an architectural standpoint, this huge block of rough brickwork, occupying a commanding position above terraces and gardens,



APPROACH TO CASINO, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA



CASINO GARDEN, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA



GARDEN ENTRANCE, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA



TERRACED GARDEN, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA

### THREE GREAT VILLAS

adds effectively to the general composition. On the garden front, the entrance to the highest terrace is through grotto-like passageways and low stuccoed apartments where fountains used to cool the summer air.

Regardless of expense, water from the River Anio was brought through a tunnel to feed the many projected pools and fountains. While the lower part of the ground was graded nearly level, the hillside was terraced and connected by ramps and stairways with the palace above. The elaborate scheme was in keeping with the dimensions of the dominating edifice and can best be understood by studying old plans showing how the outstanding sections were divided into compartments, each having a special character. On the plan by Dupérac, dated 1573, most of the vast space on the lowest level was devoted to a large square enclosed by hedges and planted with trees evenly spaced in rows. Latticed arbours shaded the cross-walks and formed a dome at their intersection where the circle of ancient cypresses marks the centre now. Octagonal pavilions arose above the crossings of the minor paths. Four labyrinths provided the idle courtiers with opportunities for diversion. At the end of one of the upper terraces a toy representation of the Holy City, the kind of memento of his travels



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

that Hadrian had included on a much larger scale in his great villa dimly visible on the Campagna a few miles away, testified to the antiquarian predilections shared by the learned Cardinal and his architect. The statue of Rome was modelled by Piero Motta. Far more interesting was the large collection of fine antique statuary brought here, including the Antinous and several other noble marble figures once belonging to Hadrian.

Ten years after Ippolito d'Este's death Montaigne visited the villa in 1581, and remarked that Cardinal Luigi, then in residence there, seemed to have discontinued all building operations. The alert traveller describes the gardens in detail and is enthusiastic about the abundance of water and the clever hydraulic inventions diverting it to curious uses. These marvellous water-works were devised by a Roman engineer named Olivieri. The enormous water-organ producing real music, the mimicry of bird-songs near the Owl Fountain and of the thunder of artillery, elsewhere, greatly impressed Montaigne. He also writes of the reservoirs edged by stone balustrades, and of the innumerable spouts of water, their spray producing a rainbow-like effect as it curved down into a long narrow tank, known as the pool of a hundred fountains. Then he praises the





CASINO AND LILY-FOUNTAIN, VILLA FARNESE, CAPRAROLA



PALACE AND GARDEN, VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI

### THREE GREAT VILLAS

fine statues that Ligorio had recovered for Cardinal d'Este from Hadrian's Villa.

In honour of a visit from Pope Gregory XIII Cardinal Luigi added the Fountain of the Dragons, these creatures being this Pope's emblems, and the Fountain of the Organ designed by Claude Venard. The great circle of cypresses on the lowest level was planted at about this time. Later, other additions to the villa were made by Cardinal Alessandro d'Este after he went to live at the villa early in the seventeenth century when the Baroque movement was in full swing. He decorated many of the old fountains and wished to add twenty-two new ones.

Contrasting with the publicity of the large pleasure grounds freely accessible to crowds of people, was a delightfully intimate little *giardino segreto* whither the prelate could withdraw from unwelcome strangers and enjoy himself amongst a few friends. After being sadly neglected during the last century of ownership by the d'Este family, the perforated terra-cotta fence, the rustic mosaic pavements and the stucco-work have been recently restored, while again the four beds bloom with flowers and the central fountain can send its spray into the air. A niche still ends the long path extending along the edge of the terrace and connecting this enclosure with

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

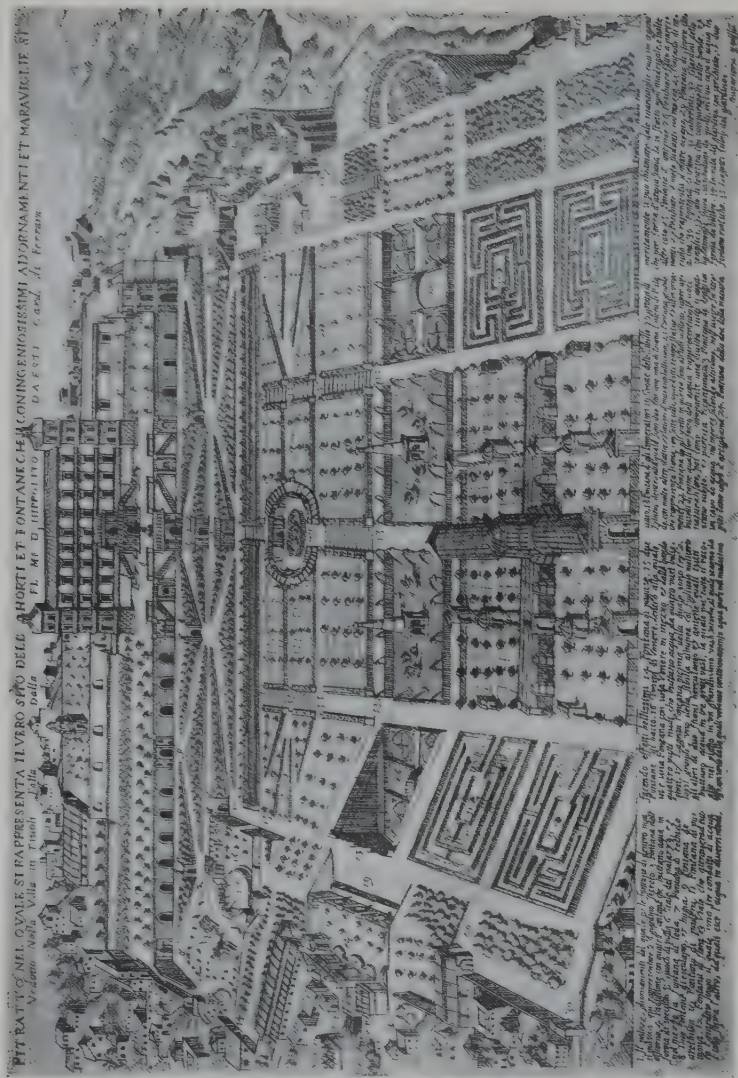
the compartments of the *Organ* and of the *Ovato*. At the opposite end of the ground, near the *Rometto*, another private garden, partly enclosed by the Owl Fountain, has also been put into almost too good order. Other drastic restorations are taking place that will produce a more agreeable effect when their newness wears off.





SECRET GARDEN, VILLA D'ESTE, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY GIOV. FRANCESCO VENTURINI





VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY DUPERAC, DATED 1573

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BAROQUE PERIOD

GARDEN-MAKING, as Bacon pointed out, is apt to lag behind the other arts and "men come to build stately sooner than to garden finely as if gardening were the greatest perfection." Undoubtedly in Italy gardens were brought to their greatest perfection when sculpture and painting had seen better days and architecture began to be in danger of losing its dignity, if not its charm.

Neither the origin of the word "Baroque" or its proper application can be defined with precision. Authorities also disagree as to when and where the movement, so named, began and when it came to an end. Probably it started either in Rome or Naples and certainly it appeared at its best during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It represented a revolt against the decline of the Golden Age into a stereotyped mould and encouraged a flow of imagination that led to progress until the desire to produce startling effects was carried to fantastic extremes. Finally, these extremes led to a reaction in favour of

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

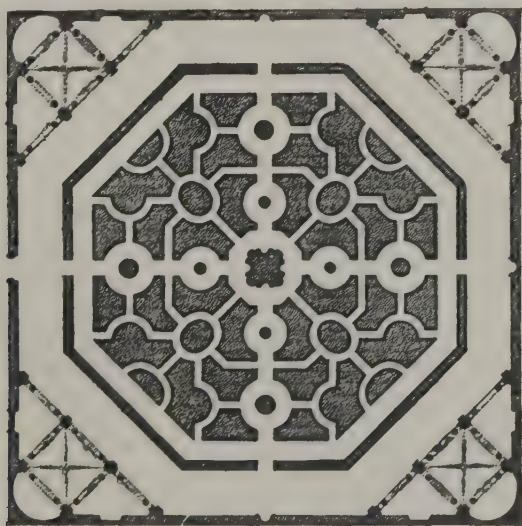
a return to classic models and brought about the Neo-classic era.

The happiest manifestations of the Baroque spirit are to be seen in the field of garden-architecture. The rhythmic curves which may seem to weaken the structure of a massive building are singularly well-attuned to an undulating landscape, and decorations that appear to lack refinement within doors are none too bold in the open air. Colourful architectural effects seem only in keeping with the flowers.

Writing "In Praise of Old Italian Gardens" Vernon Lee, many years ago, was one of the first art experts to appreciate the value of these seventeenth century developments at a time when most critics harped only on their vulgarity and decadence. After extolling the vitality that characterized Baroque designs she adds: "To this new kind of architecture belongs a new kind of sculpture. The antiques do well in their niches of box and laurel under their canopy of hanging ilex boughs; they are in their weather-stained, multiluted condition, another sort of natural material fit for the artist's use; but the old sculpture being thus in a way assimilated through the operation of earth, wind, and rain, into tree trunks, and mossy boulders, a new sculpture arises undertaking to make of marble something which will

## THE BAROQUE PERIOD

continue the impression of the trees and waters, wave its jagged outlines like the branches, twist its supple limbs like the fountains. It is high time that someone should stop the laughing and sniffing at this great sculpture of Bernini and his Italian and French followers, the last spontaneous outcome of the art of the Renaissance, of the decorative sculpture that worked in union with place and light and surroundings. Mistaken as indoor decoration, as free statuary in the sense of the antique, this sculpture has after all given us the only works which are thoroughly right in the



PLAN OF A BAROQUE GARDEN

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

open air, among the waving trees, the mad vegetation which sprouts under the moist, warm Roman sky, from every inch of masonry and travertine."

The greatest triumph of Baroque garden-architecture was shown in the liberal and varied use of water for decorative purposes and its combination with appropriate architecture and sculpture. Theatrical statuary became intimately connected with uproarious fountains and dashing cascades. To be sure the constructions of Vignola at the *Villa Lante* and at *Caprarola* and of Palladio in Venetia, besides the sculpture of Michelangelo, had paved the way. These great men were the fore-runners of a school made celebrated by Bernini, Fontana, Borromini and their numerous followers.

Unquestionably Lorenzo Bernini was the outstanding genius of this era and his work achieved immense popularity all over Europe. Called to Rome from Naples, before he was twenty-five years old he had completed four sculptured groups, including the celebrated Apollo and Daphne, intended as garden ornaments for Cardinal Borghese. Later Pope Urban VII, a member of the Barberini family, and his successor Pope Alexander VII, a Chigi, gave the sculptor many commissions. He revelled in curved ornamentation that masked structural lines, in play-





ROMAN VILLA IN THE BAROQUE STYLE, FROM A XVIII CENTURY ENGRAVING



BAROQUE STAIRWAY AND FOUNTAIN, BORROMEI GARDEN, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY GIOV. FRANCESCO VENTURINI

## THE BAROQUE PERIOD

ful *amorini* and in figures with sinuous limbs and floating draperies, who seemed to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion. Most of the statues in the old Italian gardens today are the work of his followers.

Baroque architects designed few of the finest pleasure gardens in comparison with the number that they remodelled. Their handiwork is obvious in the grandiose water-organ at the *Villa d'Este*, in the cascades at Frascati and in the grottos at the Boboli Gardens, to mention but a few of such instances. With or without professional assistance, to almost every parterre was added a *ninfeo* and a veneer of wall-decoration according to the approved fashion, though not always in the best of taste. Really well designed balustrades need no fringe of pendant stalactites, while variegated shell-work, when applied to Palladian pilasters, may seem superfluous. Results could be so easily obtained with pebbles, shells and stucco that in their joyous exuberance some amateurs went decidedly too far in their use of these materials.

Nowhere does the Baroque spirit seem so much at home as amidst the smiling scenery and rampant vegetation of the Campania and of Sicily. On the highway from Naples, passing through Portici and Resina, there is one dilapidated palace after another

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

with ornate portals lending glimpses of courtyards and dishevelled flower-beds. Yet no one garden can be singled out as particularly well planned or planted, although hidden gateways, statuary and various architectural features might repay investigation. At Portici the road runs through the immense courtyard of the grandiose *Palazzo Reale*, built with many flourishes for the first Bourbon king, Charles III, in 1738. Beyond the southern archway a wide esplanade ornamented by regal marble busts, is linked to lower terraces by curving staircases that sweep down to the shore of the bay. Of the gardens above and below the palace no care is taken now, although the palace has been turned over to an agricultural college. In the near-by town of Resina, *La Favorita*, another ex-royal villa, once had large pleasure grounds but their glories departed long ago.

At Naples, Vanvitelli laid out the *Villa Nazionale*, a fashionable promenade along the water-front, and designed the charming little classic temples dedicated to Virgil and Tasso. There is an attractive seventeenth century fountain attributed to Geronimo d'Auria and a handsome porphyry basin brought from the excavations at Pæstum.

In Sicily, the most interesting formal gardens are to be found not far from Palermo at Bagheria, a

## THE BAROQUE PERIOD

fashionable summer resort in the eighteenth century. Truly amazing are the bizarre effects produced by the unusual plan of the *Villa Palagonia* and its fantastic ornamentation. The curved palace stands in a great oval court surrounded by a wall extravagantly adorned with weird statuary.

The *Villa Valguarnera*, in the same neighbourhood as the *Palagonia*, has an impressive approach through a series of arches and a gateway leading into an immense oval forecourt enclosed by the palace and its dependencies. On a great balustraded square, framing this oval, lie the gardens. The construction was begun, in 1714, by Tomaso Napoli and completed with the help of two other architects in 1785. From a paved terrace ornamented with polychrome majolica behind the palace, in two different directions there are marvellous views of mountains and sea that, as Stendhal said, play upon the emotions like a bow upon the violin.

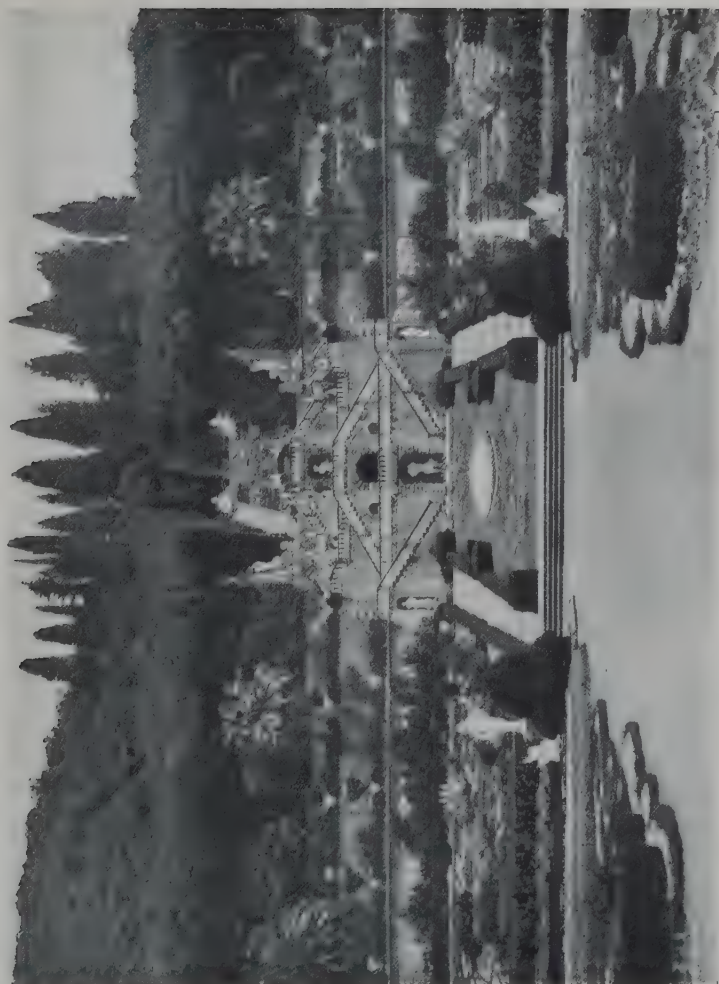
In Tuscany, where greater moderation prevailed, seventeenth century art was less apt to have its characteristics become unduly exaggerated. Perhaps the most perfect example of the Baroque, to be found there, is the *Villa Garzoni* at Collodi, near Lucca. The estate formerly belonged to the Republic of Lucca and was fortified by a castle frequently be-



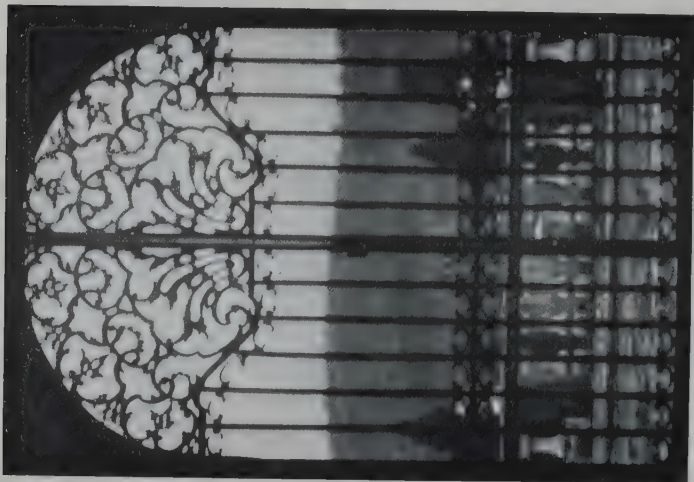
## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

sieged by the Florentines in their several attempts to capture the sister Republic during the fifteenth century. After the Garzoni family acquired the property, in less troublous times, they destroyed this stronghold and on its site erected their large and rather commonplace dwelling. At the left of the pleasure grounds ascends the highway leading to this palace and, passing under the building across the inner court, it reaches the village planned to lie under the protection of the ancient castle walls. Hiding this little hamlet from the palace windows at the rear stands a semi-circular pavilion on a balustraded terrace, both displaying the florid stucco-work ornamentation so much in vogue during the seventeenth century.

No other villa is in the same class with *Garzoni* and when first seen through the wrought iron entrance gates the theatrical appearance of the grounds is truly amazing. At first glance the harmonious scheme seems to spread out against the sky line like the curtain of an immense stage. The absence of any central building, for the palace off at one side does not enter into the composition, adds to the strange effect. Beginning with a semi-circular enclosure by the roadside, the elaborate garden rises first on gentle inclines, then steeply from terrace to terrace until a



VILLA GARZONE, COLLODI, NEAR PESCIA



GRILLE, VILLA GARZONE, COLLODI, NEAR PESCIA



ISLAND PAVILION, CASERTA

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water-way, pierced through a dense ilex grove, attains the summit of the acclivity where the vista ends with a flamboyant statue of Fame flanked by groups of gigantic cypresses. On the lower inclines are two large parterres half enclosed by undulating hedges, and embroidered with dwarf box traceries, inlaid with different-coloured pebbles, and with other arabesques compactly set with flowers, surrounding circular fountains, and accented by rounded evergreens, clipped into spiral volutes or turret shapes. Here and there white statues stand out against walls of green foliage. Seen at its best from above, the general effect is that of a gaily coloured carpet with clearly defined patterns.

Linked together by handsome double stair-cases each terrace, with its brink protected above the retaining wall by low clipped hedges strengthened at intervals by large flower-pots, instead of being guarded by a parapet or balustrade, has its own particular charm. Opening from one of them, behind an intricately wrought, iron grille, is an enchanting grotto where jets of water may be unexpectedly called forth to surprise an unwary visitor. This kind of joke can be played in other parts of the grounds and is quite in the spirit of a period when the marvellous was all the fashion.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

At the left of the highest terrace, is a toy open-air theatre, too small to be of any practical value. Another more interesting feature above even the statue a Fame, and hidden amidst the trees, is a quaint bath-house. Besides marble baths, are salons, with frescoed cupids and silken hangings, where the bathers could indulge in conversation and drink their favourite coffee.

Florence and Lucca, friends at last, are symbolized by figures reclining on each side of the upper pool. Dominating them still higher above the water stairway stands, in a rocky niche, the triumphant figure of Fame prepared to blow a powerful spout of water through her trumpet and reinforce the great cascade which is the life of the landscape.

Compared with the magnificence of Collodi perhaps the *Villa Cuzzano* near Verona seems simple and almost unadorned. Once, however, it was the property of the celebrated Scaligheri family which was apparently known by reputation to Shakespeare, when he located the feud between the families of Romeo and Juliet at Verona. Here was the country home of the illustrious Cangrande, Alberto della Scala, leader of the Ghibelline League in 1318, who received at his court Dante, Giotto and della Faggiuola, not to mention a host of other distinguished



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men. He and his successors all took great interest in art and architecture.

In the forecourt facing the house stands a chapel in the Palladian style built to commemorate a visit from San Carlo Borromeo after the villa was remodelled in the seventeenth century. At one end two flights of steps, mounting on either side of a niche containing a statue, lead to an upper garden of very informal appearance.

At the back of the house there is a superb view from the terrace across the great parterre, with its flat arabesques contrasting with tall smoothly clipped cypress accents, and across the valley to a range of high hills picturesquely dotted with farm-houses and churches. The flowing contours of the arabesques are large enough to seem in keeping with the vast scale of the undulating landscape where a rigid insistence on straight lines would produce an unpleasant effect. Two gigantic cypresses, standing on each side of an avenue, prolong the central vista through the broad fields outside the garden. Equally well-placed to focus attention on this main axis are the statues at the two chief entrances.

The *Villa Reale* at Caserta is the swan song of the Renaissance: a supreme utterance before that glorious period sank into a deadly stupor. Not begun until

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the second half of the eighteenth century, when the rhythmic fancies of the Baroque were being crushed by the soulless rigidity of the Neo-classic revival, the royal villa preserves much of the beauty and charm that is associated with an earlier era. Since the overthrow of the Bourbon kings of Naples its fame has become tarnished and few travellers appreciate how easily it can be reached and how much is to be seen there. Only part of the park can be visited in a single day.

The extensive villa was created at the instigation of Carlo III,—the first of the Spanish Bourbons to ascend the throne of the Neapolitan kingdom,—in Caserta, a small town about twenty miles from his capital. Great-grandson of Louis XIV of France and grandson of Philip IV of Spain, he showed both his French and his Spanish affiliations, which can be seen reflected in the architecture of the buildings and in the layout of the grounds. The plan of the palace is similar to that of the celebrated Royal Monastery of the Escorial, not far from Madrid, with its four inner courtyards; while the vast oval forecourt suggests the approach to the château of Versailles in the neighbourhood of Paris. Carlo modestly desired to have the stateliest residence in Europe; and accordingly erected a rectangular edifice, eight hundred



VIEW FROM TERRACE, VILLA CUZZANO, NEAR VERONA



DOLPHIN FOUNTAIN, CASERTA



ADONIS FOUNTAIN, CASERTA

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and thirty by six hundred feet, the largest building constructed during his reign. Luigi Vanvitelli, an architect of Dutch origin who had achieved a considerable reputation in Rome and Naples, was employed by Carlo to design the palace and the grounds composing the villa. It was unquestionably Vanvitelli's *magnum opus*.

At the present time this grandiose building is used for a military academy and remains noticeable chiefly on account of its immense size. The entrance façade appears drearily monotonous and uncared for, showing slight traces of any charm or distinction. Traversing the desolate forecourt, passing under the stately archway and following the carriage-drive, beneath the central pavilion, a second archway, on the farther side of the building, frames a first amazing glimpse of the stupendous cascade. There is a vista two miles long, beginning at the palace and ending in a superb water staircase descending the side of a hill almost high enough to be called a mountain, and producing a most striking effect. Below this great cascade are a series of pools and waterfalls of unusually large size and volume, chiefly designed by Vanvitelli's son Luigi. Here disport themselves innumerable marble figures. In the chief group, her attendant nymphs indignantly hasten to protect bath-



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ing Diana from the intrusive Actæon; on a lower level are Venus and Adonis with cupids and a number of minor characters; elsewhere are recumbent river-gods, dolphins, and a host of other statues. To be properly appreciated they must be seen in place, against a background of fine trees and half hidden by frothing foam.

Most charming of all secret gardens is the one at Caserta near a little tower called the *Castelluccio*. It is so successfully hidden in the woodland near the north-western boundary of the estate that few visitors are aware of its existence. Almost nothing is known of its history. In the many books written in the latter part of the eighteenth century describing the palace and the royal pleasure grounds of Caserta and the festivities of the Bourbon court, there is not one that mentions *il Castelluccio*. "Evidently it had no other object," the Director of the *Arte della Campania* states, "than to serve as a decorative and much desired refuge where the youthful court of Ferdinand IV could pass their leisure moments and carry on their amorous adventures."

Ferdinand IV, who had succeeded his father as King of Naples, when Carlo left Italy to ascend the Spanish throne in 1759, continued to employ Vanvitelli to beautify the grounds at Caserta. Probably,

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therefore, this architect designed the *Castelluccio*, as it seems to be shown on the map in a book giving an account of his celebrated masterpieces, though there is no mention of it in the text. To reach it the visitor must turn to the left after leaving the palace and follow a path through the woodland running parallel with the main avenue leading to the cascade. Half-way to the large formal lake is the little castle surrounded by a moat. It is merely an octagonal tower, with a flat roof surmounted by a smaller circular turret, not unlike one in the boxwood garden of the *Villa Muti* near Frascati.

The matchless Secret Garden is on a miniature island guarded by the *Castelluccio*. No one can enter this enchanted spot without passing through the ground floor of the tower, across a bridge over the pool, and up a ramp ascending to the parterre. Fish were preserved in the pool, which was constructed by Collecini, an engineer employed by Ferdinand IV in 1769; the water being conveyed by the marvellous aqueduct built by Vanvitelli for Carlo III at an earlier date.

So unlike are the architectural features to any visible in other Italian gardens that it is possible that they were designed by a foreigner. The pattern of the wrought-iron railing, encircling the island, bears

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a strong resemblance to the Chinese motives adopted by Chippendale. Still more Chinese are the umbrella-like shelters, fashioned of iron, above the small circles containing seats and tables placed at the corners of the ground. The three pavilions are less marked in style and, although simple, appear very attractive. The two larger ones are externally similar; one, however, was intended for informal banquets, while the other served for a kitchen. The third of these buildings, not half the size of either of the others, was a resort for drinking coffee. It is easy to imagine how Ferdinand and his Austrian wife Maria Carolina, sister of Queen Marie Antoinette, must have amused themselves by picnicking here. No doubt Nelson and his beautiful Emma, not to mention Sir William Hamilton, were among their favourite guests, as they frequently visited Caserta. Another quaint feature is a tiny mount with a spiral ramp leading to the top and underneath a grotto. The ground is covered with masses of flowers, tended by the loving hands of an old soldier, who regrets that his work is so seldom interrupted by visitors. Even in February, the beds are gay with camellias, bearing wine-red blossoms set off by firm glossy foliage, quantities of misty pink stocks with greyish-green leaves, and tufts of violets. The effect is far more beautiful in May and June,



RAMP AT CASTELLUCCIO, CASERTA



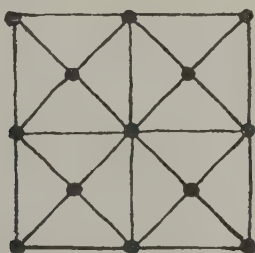
BAROQUE GATEWAY, RAPALLO



## THE BAROQUE PERIOD

when all the carnations, poppies, pansies, and other annuals coming into bloom make a perfect riot of colour.

Among the other enclosures in the park are an old apple-orchard, an orange garden, and a parterre in front of an interesting old lemon-house. Maria Carolina began a so-called *Giardino Inglese* near the monumental cascade, in 1782, with the help of an Englishman named Graefer. It has the usual winding paths and kidney-shaped beds filled with specimen exotics. Of its kind, it is especially good, and well kept up. Is it not possible that this English expert may have expressed his idea to even better advantage by putting the finishing touches upon the fascinating little island-garden of the *Castelluccio*?



QUINCUNX

## CHAPTER XII

### ROMAN VILLAS

THE Princes of the Church, who dominated Rome for so many centuries, were great patrons of all the arts not excluding that of garden-making. One after another, successive Popes added new buildings and new pleasure gardens to those created by their predecessors, and many of the Cardinals also did much to beautify the Holy City. Groups of spacious villas covered the encircling hills, their magnificent parade grounds so open to the public, that *giardini segreti*, (hidden gardens,) were always included.

Among the most interesting, partly on account of their historical associations, are the pleasure grounds ascending the hill adjoining the Vatican. Their general appearance suggests a walled park, embracing grassy slopes, groves of trees, and masses of shrubbery, with here and there a piece of statuary or a fountain, set out with no intention of producing a formal effect. Since the Popes have become prisoners in the Vatican and their excursions abroad are restricted to these few acres they would naturally desire to create at least the illusion of "*rus in urbe*."

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In the time of the Roman Empire there were pleasant villas here belonging to Agrippina and to Domitian. Early records show that Nicholas III covered part of the slopes with an orchard and that, in 1450, Nicholas V planted a vineyard embellished by a fish-pond and a fountain. Later, Paul III included these in a secret garden with two barrel-vaulted arbours covering the main cross paths. Of these various constructions nothing remains to-day.

The more formal scheme was begun by Julius II, the celebrated member of the della Rovere family, who added to his fame by patronizing Bramante, Michelangelo, and Raphael. A new era in architecture began with Bramante's designs for the courts of the *Pigna* and of the *Belvedere* to be connected by a magnificent staircase. Rows of orange-trees, alleys paved with brick, evergreen hedges, marble statues, and fountains no longer ornament the bare *Giardino della Pigna* and the *Giardino del Belvedere* is unworthy of its name.

The present sunken garden, partly on the site of Paul III's *Giardino Segreto*, was laid out in 1678. As usually seen from above, the bird's eye view of the formal parterre, with the insignia of the Pope in carpet-bedding and palms for accents, is not very

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inviting. The details seem too trivial for the large size of the enclosure.

By far the most attractive architectural feature on the grounds is the charming little garden-house erected in a section known as the *Villa Pia*. This casino, with its two pavilions facing each other across an oval courtyard, was designed for Paul IV and completed for his successor, Pius IV, by Pirro Ligorio. The classic style of the buildings makes apparent that the architect had studied ancient models, though he did not try to reproduce them literally. The larger pavilion, three stories high, contains several rooms, while the smaller one consists chiefly of a loggia. Between their fancifully ornamental façades lies a paved oval courtyard walled high enough to preserve it from outside observation. Restful benches are built against the wall and suggest that this must have been a delightful centre for the lively interchange of ideas that used to delight the Popes and groups of their friends in the sixteenth century.

Originally, instead of meaningless grass banks, the casino had an appropriately formal setting, though the irregular lay of the land prevented its being symmetrical. Above were thickets of shrubbery and high trees overshadowing the roof of the larger building,



VILLA PIA, VATICAN GARDENS, ROME, FROM AN OLD ENGRAVING BY FALDA





VILLA PIA, VATICAN GARDENS, ROME

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while below lay a series of triangular plots divided into hedged compartments that diminished in size as they approached the fountain basin at the base of the smaller pavilion. Unfortunately Pius V lent the villa to his physician who destroyed the design of the planting by using the beds for medicinal herbs and by setting out exotic trees in the most inappropriate positions. The final destruction was wrought by Gregory XVI, who swept away the entire garden.

Julius III had a special predilection for the Del Monte vineyard, stretching from the Tiber beyond the Via Flaminia, not far outside the Porto del Popolo. In his reign, beginning after a troublous period, the first motto inscribed on his medallions was *Hilaritas ponteficia*, *hilaritas publica*. Evidently, like Nitti after the great war, he thought that what his world needed was to smile. So he built a delightful casino at the *Vigna del Papa*, or *Villa di Papa Giulio*, where he and his friends could enjoy themselves free from the cares of state. In the warm weather he would invite a gay party to meet him at the *Castel Sant' Angelo* and accompany him, in a gorgeous papal barge, on the Tiber as far as the *Vigna*. Then, after passing through a shady pergola, they would soon find their way to the enchanting casino with its airy loggias, retired gardens, subter-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

anean swimming-pools and dank grottoes where the heat could never penetrate. "Here," to quote Sante Bargellini's interesting account, "they feasted, they sang, gave recitations and went to the chase. Michelangelo seated next to the Pope discussed artistic questions, the cardinals and the ladies walked about mingling the colours of their garments with those of the flowers and of the precious marbles."

The *Villa di Papa Giulio* then included, outside the casino, beautiful grounds with pleasant walks leading to fountains, pavilions and statuary. Celebrated artists and architects collaborated to make not only the main building beautiful, but to perfect every part of its environment. Michelangelo is said to have drawn the first plans for the two courtyards and the surrounding loggias, but the construction was carried on by Vignola, Vasari and Ammanati. Although the spacious grounds have disappeared the Casino, now used as an Etruscan museum, has preserved much of its original beauty. Charminglly frescoed grape-vines decorate the ceiling of the curving arcade, flowers grow in the *giardini segreti* and water flows from the fountains.

Here eight cardinals welcomed Cosimo de Medici when he came to Rome to be crowned first Grand Duke of Tuscany. Pope Pius V thus rewarded

## ROMAN VILLAS

Cosimo for giving up the heretic Carnesecche, who was burnt to death by order of the Inquisition in 1567, much to the Pope's relief. Cosimo must have delighted in the great semi-circular loggia, the many frescoes by Zuccaro, and the charming little secret gardens hidden in the background. After his long journey it is to be hoped that the visitor had time to bathe in the refreshing pool, secluded beneath a grotto, mantled with maidenhair ferns, behind some caryatides suggesting a group in his favourite villa of *Poggio a Cajano*.

On a slope of Monte Mario, within easy access of Rome, Cardinal Giulio de Medici, as early as 1516, purchased a *vigna* and began to build a magnificent casino where he could invite his artistic and literary friends to come for a day of recreation. The word *vigna* then signified not merely a vineyard, but an unassuming casino with simple gardens suitable for a day's outing, and was applied even to a large country-seat. Raphael made the first plans for this estate, later known as the *Villa Madama*. In the Uffizzi Gallery is preserved a sketch showing how he had intended to extend terraces south of the casino in three sections—an oval, a circle and a square—all on the same axis. At his death he left the execution of his idea far from complete and it was con-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

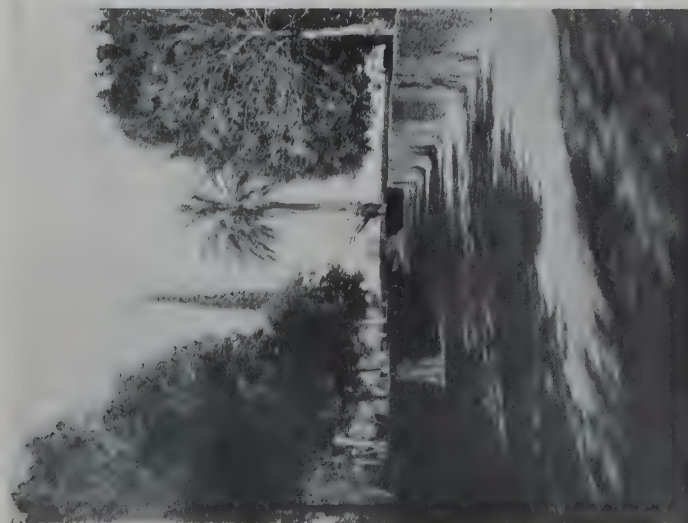
tinued along rather different lines by Antonio da San Gallo. Three plans, also preserved in the Uffizzi, show schemes for laying out the villa by architects of the San Gallo family. The best of these was by Antonio the Younger and the Cardinal employed him to carry it out. If he could have finished the villa it would have surpassed all previous constructions of the kind. At least, he half built the fore-court and erected the first story of the sumptuous casino centred on a large circular court adjacent to a magnificent loggia, frescoed by Giulio Romano and decorated in stucco by Giovanni d'Udine, its great arches opening into a walled garden. Gigantic figures guard a portal giving access to a terrace, stretching at great length along the hill-side. Just below the walled garden is an immense tank intended for a fish-preserve. These are the only fragments extant of a much larger and more elaborate scheme, including a succession of other gardens, pools, and an open-air theatre, that mostly existed only on paper.

Upon the accession of Adrian VI, Cardinal de Medici returned to his early home in Florence and the work came to a standstill at the villa. Its appearance at this time is shown in a picture by Giulio Romano, representing a battle where the Emperor Constantine was victorious beneath Monte Mario,





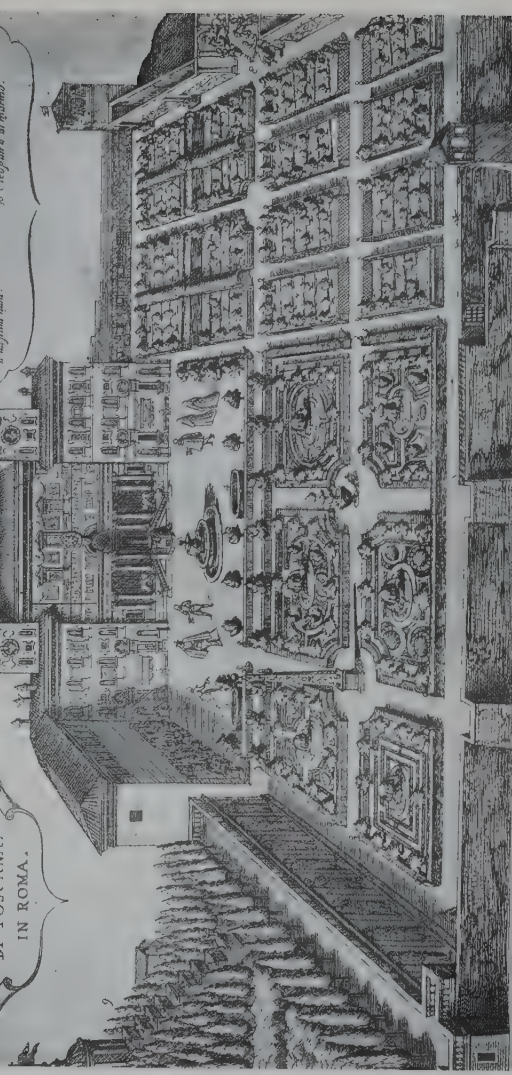
CYPRESS ALLEY, VILLA FARNESE, ROME



VILLA FARNESE, ROME

DISEGNO ET SITO  
 DEL SONTOSO GIARDINO  
 ET PALAZZO  
 DEL SER.<sup>MO</sup> GRAN DVCA  
 DI TOSCANA.  
 IN ROMA.

1. La chiesa della nostra signora della misericordia
2. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
3. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
4. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
5. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
6. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
7. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
8. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
9. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia
10. Palazzo della nostra signora della misericordia



Questo Palazzo è situato nel Monte Pincio sopra i ruderi di una casa di Roma, da cui si vedono i monti e tutta la città. Il giardino è bellissimo e ha molte fontane. Il palazzo è molto grande e ha molte stanze. Il giardino è molto grande e ha molte alberi. Il palazzo è molto grande e ha molte stanze. Il giardino è molto grande e ha molte alberi.

## ROMAN VILLAS

and the plan remained untouched until a few years ago. As the first example of a great villa, where the architect had planned to unite both casino and pleasure grounds in a single logical composition, it marked the beginning of a new era in landscape architecture. To what extent the design had been inspired by the Florentine villas, known to Cardinal de Medici and to his architects from their earliest days, is a question difficult to answer.

After Giulio de Medici returned to Rome as Clement VII, although he continued to employ Antonio da San Gallo, the villa was left unfinished. Upon the Pope's death it passed to Margaret of Austria, widow of his cousin Alessandro de Medici. She often stayed there before her marriage to Ottavio Farnese, duke of Parma, and as she was called Madama Margherita her residence was known as the *Villa Madama*. When a third Cardinal de Medici, Giovanni son of the Grand Duke Cosimo I, came to Rome, and was graciously received by his cousin Pius IV, he wrote of visiting the *Villa Madama* saying: "Last Sunday I dined with Cardinal Farnese in the Vigna, once the property of Clement of blessed memory, and now owned by Madama di Parma. It is a pleasant place, shady and with fountains, where we passed the day very agreeably and

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

stayed for supper." After the Duchess of Parma left the villa it became sadly neglected. Later it passed through the Farnese family to the Neapolitan Bourbons, but nothing was done on a large scale to restore the villa until it was purchased recently by Conte and Contessa d'Entrice di Frasso. With excellent taste and regardless of expense they are completing both house and grounds, at last.

Like an island in a sea of antiquities, a part of the Palatine Hill, crowned with the *Orti Farnesiani*, rises above the ruined palaces of the Cæsars. Paul III had employed Vignola to improve some gardens already existing there. He constructed a series of ramps and stairways leading up the terraced hillside to the plateau high above. The end of the central axis was marked by a monumental niche. Much of this architecture was overthrown for the purpose of excavating the ground underneath, but there is enough of the upper stairway remaining to show the beauty of the design. Unfortunately the large twin aviaries, rising on either side above the niche, have disappeared and, in their stead, has been erected a comparatively insignificant pavilion. There was never any habitation, except for birds, built on the grounds during the Renaissance period. The general effect of the peaceful gardens, with box-edged beds of irises,

## ROMAN VILLAS

narcissi, stocks and violets between long cypress alleys, would be a sufficient attraction to make the steep ascent seem worth while, apart from the superb view over the ivy-clad ruins to the picturesque skyline of the old city.

Delightful gardens on the Quirinal Hill, often known as the *Villa Colonna*, not far from the crowded Via Nazionale, stand serenely apart from the busy world below. Bridges, across an intervening street, on a level with the second story of the palace, connect it with a broad terrace at the foot of a hill-side ornamented by formal cascades, statuary and a high retaining wall, partly disguised by columns and niches sheltering statues of ancient Romans. Ramps and stairways overshadowed by ilexes, lead up to a large square garden with a fountain-basin in the centre. When the cold weather is safely past the potted orange and lemon trees, brought forth from the old conservatory, are placed upon their stone pedestals around the pool, and the box-edged parterre is filled with blossoming tulips, narcissi, violets and stocks. This was a favourite meeting place for Vittoria Colonna and her friends, Cardinal Bembo and Cardinal Pole. Here in the last years of her life she walked and talked with Michelangelo.

True to the family traditions Cardinal Ferdinand



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

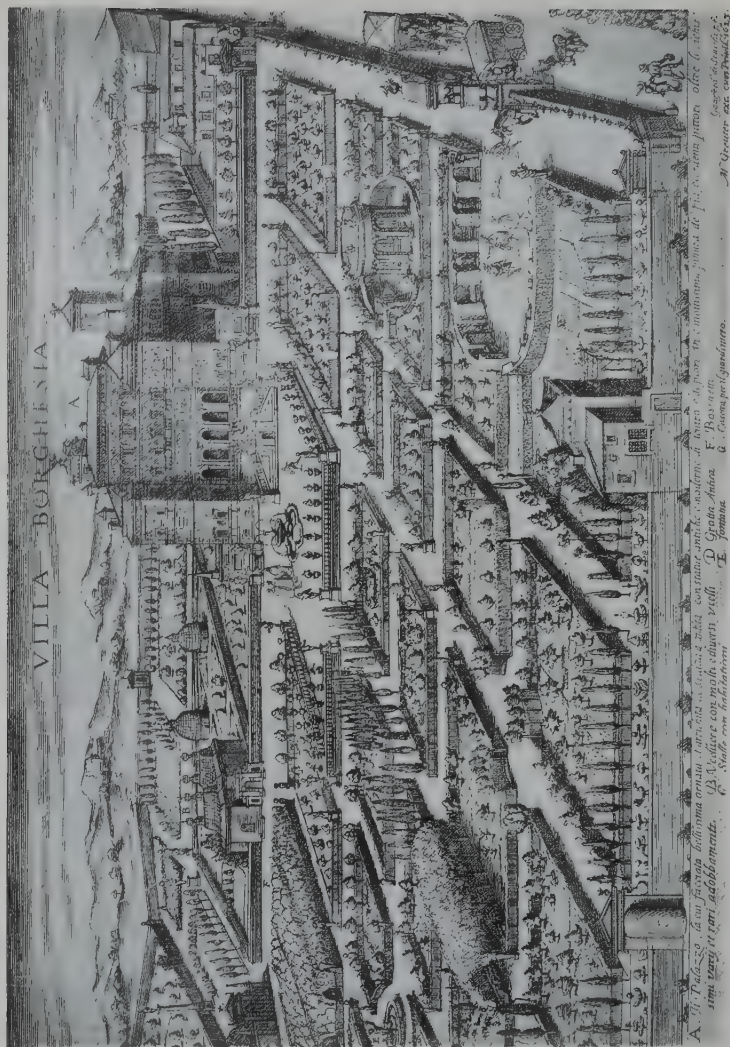
de Medici built himself a villa on the Pincian Hill that was, and is, second to none in Rome. The site of the *Villa Medici*, with its view, in one direction, of the great city, and, on the opposite side, of the wooded slopes and green fields of the *Villa Borghese*, was once covered by the celebrated gardens of Lucullus. Cardinal de Medici acquired the estate from Cardinal Ricci who had already begun to transform the *vigna* there. Strangely enough Annibale Lippi, the architect responsible for the excellent plan, was not distinguished as the author of other important work. Harmonious as a whole, logical in its arrangement and uninjured by superfluous details, the general effect is one of great serenity and simplicity. On the garden side of the handsome palace, its façade, impanelled with classic bas-reliefs, overhangs a stately loggia with a broad unimpeded vista across a square of bare ground and an evergreen bordered parterre, towards the *Villa Borghese*. Above the parterre rises a high wall broken by an archway that was depicted by Velasquez when he was living in the palace. A staircase in this wall leads to an ilex grove on the upper slope, at the foot of an artificial mount erected on the ruin of a circular building that may have belonged to Lucullus. Contrasting with the sunny parterre to the north, lies a shady plot of



PARTERRE, VILLA MEDICI, ROME



VIEW FROM LOGGIA, VILLA MEDICI, ROME



VILLA BORGHESE, ROME, 1623, FROM AN ENGRAVING BY GOTTFRED' DE SCAICHI

## ROMAN VILLAS

ground divided by hedges into squares and planted with stone-pines, ilexes and other trees. During his stay in Rome, Ferdinand de Medici had arranged in this villa a superb collection of statuary, including the Venus de Medici and the group of Niobe with her children recovered from Hadrian's villa, besides the Mercury by Giambologna. After the Cardinal succeeded his father, Cosimo I, and his detested brother Francis, as the third Grand Duke of Tuscany, these precious possessions were gradually removed to Florence. He was on friendly terms with his cousin Catherine de Medici and before becoming Queen of France, she had frequented his palace. While it still belonged to the Medici family, Galileo, who had lived in Florence under the protection of Ferdinand's son Cosimo II, spent a few days at this villa after his release from imprisonment by the Inquisition.

Early in the nineteenth century the *Villa Medici* became the Roman home of the French Academy. Youthful prize-winners, artists, and architects use the small pavilions on the grounds for their studios and have access to the palace. For what better purpose could the villa serve than to furnish inspiration for the art of the future?

Across the road, below the pleasure grounds of

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the *Villa Medici*, lies the extensive park forming part of the *Villa Borghese*. As it is now owned by the government and freely opened to the public, a brief description of the old gardens will suffice. At the back of the Casino, designed by the Flemish architect Vasanzio, which contains the art collection, lies a pleasant parterre ornamented with fountains and statuary in the style of the seventeenth century. At the two ends of the building are *giardini segreti* with box-embroidered compartments that appear to have remained almost unchanged since their completion. Gay Baroque pavilions, with flamboyant roofs and niches, enshrining marble busts, add a touch of diversion that recalls the charms of Nymphenburg. The small twin edifices joined by a central arch were intended for aviaries.

Near the picturesque lake, where the landscape has a romantic appearance, is a circular temple and a ruin lies reflected in the water. An enclosed garden here is of no particular importance. There are a few rather interesting architectural features scattered about the grounds, although the marble balustrade, bounding the forecourt in front of the Casino, has been transferred to England.

Many changes have taken place in the *Villa Corsini*, at the foot of the Janiculum, built originally



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for the Riario family. After being acquired by Cardinal Corsini the palace was remodelled by Fuga in the Baroque style. Later it became the home of Queen Christina of Sweden, the patroness of the Arcadian Academy. More recently the villa was bought by the government and the palace houses the *Reale Accademia de Lincei*; while the grounds have been partly devoted to a botanic garden, and partly turned into a park. In the section behind the building, where a seventeenth century atmosphere still prevails, the most interesting feature is a broad and stately water stairway.

Not far from there, approaching the summit of *Monte Janicolo*, stands a quaint little building, with terraced grounds below, constructed for the benefit of the Arcadian Academy. The site of the villa, known as the *Bosco Parrasio*, was given to the Academicians by John V of Portugal. Of the many eighteenth century academies in Italy this one was the most celebrated. Sometimes the members held a meeting, presided over by their patroness Queen Christina of Sweden, while seated on the oval exedra outside their salon and above the high-walled grove with curved stairways leading down the hillside and bringing into view grottoes and fountains, all on a very small scale. Exciting discussions must have taken

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place there when the poet Metastasio, the tempestuous red-haired dramatist Count Alfieri and the learned Crescimbeni were among those who frequented the Academy. The members welcomed Goethe in 1788. Madame de Staël in "Corinne" was inspired by another episode there;—the crowning of Corilla Olimpica, a well-known blue-stocking and improvisatrice.

Several large country-seats on the Janiculum contain good features, such as the fountain at the *Villa Sciarra-Wurts*, but none has been planned and planted to form a harmonious whole that is of any especial interest. Perhaps an exception should be made for the *Villa Pamphili-Doria* with its great terrace covered with the monotonous scroll-work that started a reaction in favour of a return to nature. When Olimpia Pamphili, sister of Pope Innocent X, built the casino and laid out the terraces, in 1650, they were filled with more contrasts between light and shade and must have had a less arid appearance.

While the Popes enjoyed their temporal power and did not feel obliged to protest against its usurpation by remaining within the confines of the Vatican, their favourite residence for many years had been the *Villa Quirinale*. Pius V acquired an estate on



TEMPIETTO, VILLA BORGHESE, ROME



SECRET GARDEN, VILLA BORGHESE, ROME



AVIARY IN SECRET GARDEN, VILLA BORGHESE, ROME

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the Quirinal Hill from Ippolito d'Este when the Cardinal began to build his villa at Tivoli. Gregory XIII employed Flaminio Ponzio and Ottavio Mascherino to build a new papal palace there and Paul V designed the pleasure grounds. His commonplace plan, which included laurel groves, elaborate water-works and a *giardino segreto*, was carried out by Maderna. Most of the level ground was monotonously subdivided into an endless number of squares bordered by evergreen hedges. On the sloping ground a *tempietto* stood above some irregularly planted trees and shrubs. Previously, Gregory had built a fountain surmounted by his arms, Sixtus V had commissioned Maderna to construct a water-organ, and Clement VIII was responsible for a number of fountains. Later, Fuga was engaged by Benedict XIV, soon after his accession in 1740, to build a *caffèaus*.

Few innovations have been made in the gardens since the villa had become the home of the Italian royal family. The grandiose water-organ, the fountain of Venus, and the balustraded terrace, with its parterre next the palace, still are there, but unfortunately palms have replaced the cypresses that used to line the alleys. Perhaps the day will come when the



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palm will meet the same fate in Italy as has the blue spruce in the gardens of the United States. Seldom does their exotic foliage fit into any picture.

Almost every visitor to Rome who ascends the Aventine Hill, to visit the old churches and monasteries there, seizes the opportunity to peep through the key-hole, in the heavy wooden door barring the entrance to the *Villa of the Knights of Malta*, for a view of the distant Dome of Saint Peter's. The Priory garden, still better worth seeing, has preserved a quaint eighteenth century atmosphere. Piranesi, whose engravings of Roman ruins have made him famous, is supposed to have remodelled the grounds at about the same time that he restored the chapel, in 1765. The approach, through a dark tunnel overhung by laurel branches leading to a gay parterre with a charming grotto and other Baroque architectural accessories, is very effective. On the lower terrace everything shrinks into insignificance compared to the widespread landscape below.

In a remote region outside the Porta Salaria the group of simple buildings at the *Villa Chigi* have retained the pleasant, homely character of a farm centre. Between the plain hospitable-looking house and the road, a variety of fruit and flower-gardens all placed on the same axis have an unpretentious charm.

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The two small walled enclosures with wrought-iron gates are especially attractive. At the back of the house is a box-edged parterre, where terra-cotta flower-pots stand on old grey stone pedestals, and from the centre extends a long walk, between high hedges of old boxwood, ending in a semicircle where statues stand out against a leafy background. It is all rather primitive and on that account particularly delightful, and easy to understand.

As an expression of style it is a far cry from the rustic charm of Prince Chigi's estate to the overwhelming magnificence of Cardinal Albani's former country-seat (now the *Villa Torlonia* and the residence of Benito Mussolini) although actually both lie in the same locality. The Cardinal made his own designs and employed Carlo Marchionni to erect some neo-classic buildings according to these plans, in the middle of the eighteenth century. The buildings and the pleasure grounds were intended to serve as galleries for the dazzling display of the Albani collection of sculpture. Through his friend Wincklemann, the archæologist, the Cardinal obtained several fine statues from the *Villa d'Este*.

Between the palatial casino and the grandiose semicircular loggia, Antonio Nolli laid out a carpet of prim foliage plants and flowers, patterned in elab-

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orate arabesques. More appealing to good taste are the outside walks with walls and niches of clipped foliage throwing into relief marble busts and statuary.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ON THE ALBAN HILLS

FROM the time of the Roman Empire the Alban Hills have been a favourite summer resort for the citizens of Rome. During the reign of Domitian there was a large villa at Frascati, belonging to the imperial family, and on the surrounding hills are the remains of many other ancient country-places. Not far away, on the road to Tusculum, is supposed to be the site of Cicero's celebrated villa.

In the sixteenth century several prelates constructed magnificent summer residences at Frascati. The earliest of any importance is the *Villa Falconieri* where, in the first half of the century, Filippo Rufini, Bishop of Sarno, laid out the grounds. Paul III had a medal struck to commemorate their completion bearing the inscription "Rufina Tuscolo Rest." Dating from this period is the dark mysterious-looking pool mirroring venerable cypresses that tower to a great height against the sky. The simple staircase leading from this reservoir to a lower secret garden, now in a sadly neglected state, also belongs to the

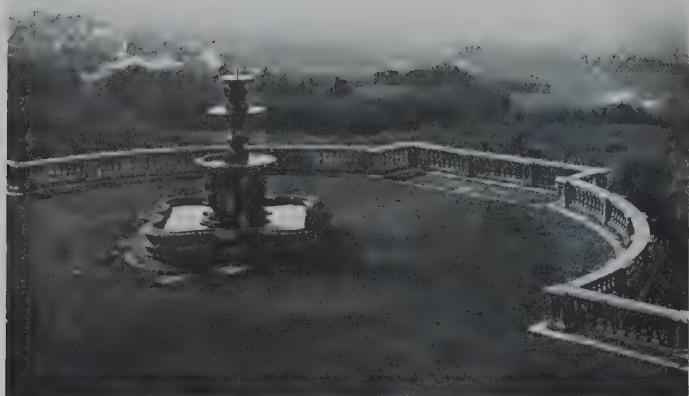
## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

same time. Dogs appertaining to the Rufini coat-of-arms surmount some of the gate-posts. When the Falconieri family acquired the property, in the seventeenth century, they employed the Lombard architect, Carlo Borromini, to build them a house and to remodel the grounds, where the falcons of the Falconieri soon outrivalled the Rufini dogs. Borromini, the contemporary of Bernini and his chief rival as a leader of the Baroque movement, constructed a handsome palace that even his most captious critics can hardly fail to admire. The frescoes on the walls of the ground floor give a delightful idea of the gay life and the charming costumes of the members of the Roman nobility, who ate their melons on the stone tables in the shady ilex grove beyond the forecourt and picked the flowers in the posy-beds outside the garden-room. There are several imposing gateways designed by Borromini but few other architectural features of any especial importance remain on the rest of the grounds. In 1906 the villa was purchased for the German Academy and became the residence of German students, until they were forced to take their departure when Italy entered the world war. The Italian government has now expropriated the property and its future is uncertain. Its tenure was offered by Mussolini to d'Annunzio for his life-time, but the





POOL, VILLA FALCONIERI, FRASCATI



TERRACE, VILLA MONDRAGONE, FRASCATI



UPPER POOL, VILLA TORLONIA, FRASCATI

## ON THE ALBAN HILLS

poet continues to live on the shore of Lake Garda.

Higher up in the same direction stands the *Villa Mondragone* commanding a superb view of the Campagna. It takes its name from the dragon on the crest of Pope Gregory XIII, in whose honour the villa was built by Cardinal Altempo and his architect Martino Longhi, the Elder, about 1575. Later Altempo exchanged the villa for one on the Quirinal belonging to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of Paul V. Cardinal Borghese employed the Lombard architect Flaminio Ponzio to make many additions. The balustraded terrace where two great columns mask kitchen chimneys, and the magnificent fountain are attributed to Fontana. From the balcony overhanging this terrace is a superb view over the Campagna towards the Eternal City. Parallel to the entrance court, a dreary waste of dirt where the students now play ball, is a walled garden opening into a loggia connected with the right wing of the house, wrongly supposed to have been the work of Vignola not long before his death. Formerly the high walls were masked by palisades of trees, clipped low enough not to conceal a series of busts in niches set near the top of the wall, and the ground was covered with flowers. At the further end, opposite the loggia, a double staircase ascends to a platform backed by a

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

pavilion ornamented by statues and fountains in niches, making what was known as a *théâtre d'eau*. Fontana designed this stage and its setting to serve for open-air performances.

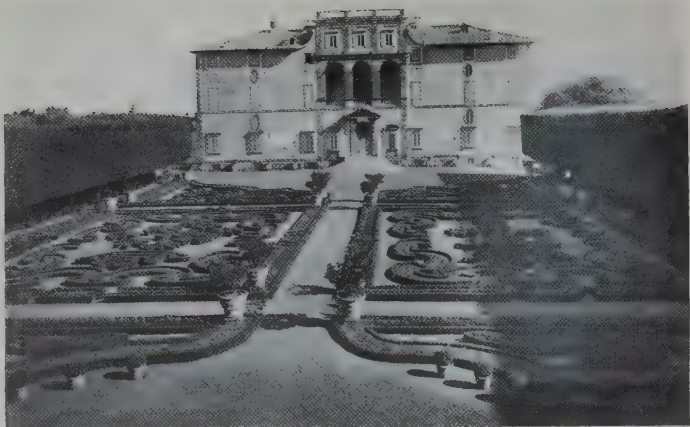
Opposite his own villa Cardinal Borghese acquired some land from Cardinal Taverna and constructed a house and gardens there for his sister. This was known as the *Villa Borghese*, until, in comparatively recent years, it came into the possession of the Parisi family. After seeing some of the rather dreary and neglected show-places at Frascati this simple home-like villa shines by contrast. Between the house and the road is a walled *giardino segreto* with a good doorway. The treatment of the space at the back of the house is unusual. A sunken courtyard, where a high retaining wall holds back the hillside, is connected with the upper level by an interesting curved stairway.

Another of the more home-like villas at Frascati is the *Villa Muti*, beyond the *Villa Torlonia* on the outskirts of the town. There are a series of enclosures on different levels. The lowest is diversified by box hedges, and ends in a terrace upholding a miniature tower. On a higher level is a pleasant flower-garden with a lily pool and several good, but unpretentious, architectural features. For many years the tenant was



BOX GARDEN, VILLA MUTI, FRASCATI





PARTERRE, VILLA LANCELOTTI, FRASCATI



THÉÂTRE D'EAU, VILLA LANCELOTTI, FRASCATI

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Donna Elsie Torlonia, an American, who introduced more flowers than are to be seen in the sadly neglected parterres of too many of the other villas.

Besides the large house, and the grove of fine old plane-trees, the great water-stairway particularly distinguishes the *Villa Aldobrandini*. It was designed for Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, nephew of Pope Clement VIII, by Giacomina della Porta, in 1603, and completed by Fontana. The semicircular *théâtre d'eau* with the stucco peeling off the niches and the statuary below the steep water-stairway descending from a woodland, where was formerly the sacred grove of Diana, were much admired in the seventeenth century. President Desbrosses spoke most enthusiastically about the surprise waterworks there.

Two small boat fountains, one in the pleasant parterre near the *théâtre d'eau* and the other inserted in a niche of the terrace parapet outside the grove of fine old plane-trees, should not be overlooked.

The immense flight of steps at the *Villa Torlonia* arouses unfulfilled expectation for it leads only to a narrow terrace, leaving the unpretentious house entirely out of the composition. At the summit of the thickly wooded hillside, surrounded by a shady grove, lies a beautiful balustraded pool, used for a reservoir, perhaps the most perfect one of its kind.

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The water collected here reappears, gushing forth from a Baroque head and dashing down a channel over stone steps into a four successive oval basins, finally falling into a large semicircular pool at the bottom. On each side of this cascade are parallel stairways that add greatly to its importance.

The garden at the *Villa Lancelotti* consists of a spacious enclosure bounded by an imposing palace at one end, balanced by a *théâtre d'eau* at the other, while on the sides are walls of clipped ilex. The intervening parterre is patterned with box-edged arabesques neatly filled with dwarf plants to give the effect known as carpet-bedding. It is a perfect example of the kind of parade-ground that Falda was always holding up for admiration in his seventeenth century engravings of gardens.

It is only a few pleasant miles from Frascati to Castel Gandolfo, on Lake Albano. Here, near the site of a castle owned in the middle ages by the powerful Savelli family, Pope Urban VIII employed Maderna to build a palace and lay out some pleasure grounds. In its prime the *giardino segreto* behind the palace, with its statues, fountains and *caffèaus*, must have been delightful; but, since the loss of the Pope's temporal power, the villa has been seldom occupied and the garden has become a wilderness.

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The Barberini family, of which Pope Urban was a member, own a large estate across the road from the Papal palace. This *Villa Barberini* has the welcome appearance of being intimately connected with a farm, unlike the showy country seats at Frascati. On a flat ridge of land, beyond the large unassuming house, lies a long stretch of grass, with rows of trees planted at regular intervals. At one side, overlooking olive orchards and vineyards, high above the Campagna is an alley of picturesque ilexes with trunks so gnarled and twisted that they look hundreds of years old. Nearer the house is a *giardino segreto* on a triangular plot of ground that has originated an unusual plan. Entered by a charming double stairway it contains two carved stone fountains, on pedestals three or four feet high, into which fall jets of water.

At Albano, behind the palace occupied by the municipality, there are the remains of an old formal garden. Below it is an unusually fine avenue of stone pines. Italy owes part of its charm to the fact that such delightful spots can often be found in the most unexpected places.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GENOESE GARDENS

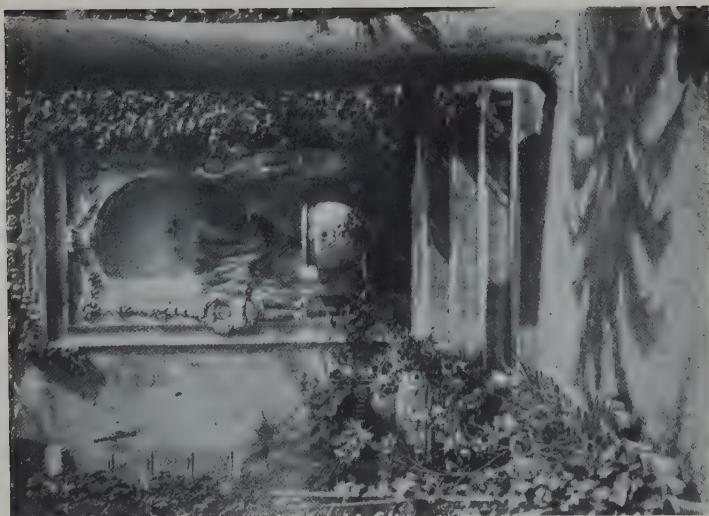
AT the two extremities of the Italian peninsula the magnificent harbours of Genoa and Naples have been endowed by nature along similar lines. Each is seated on a natural amphitheatre of land, rising in an immense semi-circle from the shore of the Mediterranean to lofty heights above, and offering sites for villas either at the water front, or on terraced hills looking across the smoky confines of a large city to the everchanging blues and greens of the untrammelled sea. Very different, however, was the use made of these opportunities during the Renaissance Period by the merchant princes of the stirring Genoese Republic and by the decadent or absentee kings of Naples and the indolent aristocracy there.

Unlike Naples the domestic architecture of Genoa is not without a certain distinction. By a process of evolution, such as is apparent in the sky-scrapers of New York, the proud Genoese palaces, elbowing each other on dark, narrow streets and concealing, behind austere façades, splendid apartments and double





TEMPIETTO, VILLA ROSAZZA, GENOA



NICHE, VILLA ROSAZZA, GENOA



WATER-WAY, VILLA ROSAZZA, GENOA



POOL, VILLA ROSAZZA, GENOA

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courtyards, developed certain marked characteristics. On the Via Nuova, laid out by the Perugian architect, Galeazzo Alessi, between 1550 and 1560, there were numerous distinctively Genoese palaces of that era which excited the admiration of the great painter Rubens.

No generalizations, however, can be applied to the villas. The most interesting bear slight resemblance to one another. A reason for this dissimilarity may be that there was no group of Genoese architects engaged in planning country-seats. Outsiders were called in to design them and each, after solving his particular problem in his own way, took his departure. Fra Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli, a pupil of Michelangelo and primarily a sculptor, was summoned from Florence, Giovanni Battista Castello from Bergamo, and Galeazzo Alessi from Rome. There was slight chance of collaboration between them or of that interchange of ideas that leads to the evolution of a collective style.

The first of these villas, and the most interesting from an historical standpoint, was built for Admiral Andrea Doria by Fra Montorsoli at the suburb of Fassoli. It was begun in 1521, when, according to the inscription ornamenting the façade of his palace, the admiral had decided to withdraw from a public

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career and "enjoy in peace the fruits of an honoured life." This intention does not seem to have been fulfilled very promptly for, seventeen years later, he played a shady part in the defeat of the Christian fleet by the Turks at La Trévisa, off the coast of Asia Minor.

The site of the *Villa Doria*, not far from the present railroad station, upon a hillside descending to a wide shelf of land just above the sea, was purchased in 1521, from the Lomellini and Giustiniani families. Fra Montorsoli enlarged a building, already erected a few hundred feet from the water front, and laid out a series of beautiful gardens. From the street the exterior of the building is only interesting on account of the decorative band of inscriptions beneath the cornice; but at the back, facing the sea, a long colonnade, with two projecting loggias, produces a stately effect. Near the entrance a lop-sided parterre, partly enclosed by the arcades and by particularly well-designed marble balustrades, contains Valsoldi's Triton fountain in the centre. As the palace is not parallel with the lower enclosure the treatment of the intervening strip of ground presented a difficult problem.

Below lies a spacious garden that was given its present form by Gianandrea Doria, after he inherited

## GENOESE GARDENS

the property at the death of his illustrious uncle Andrea. In 1599, three sculptors, named Carlone, erected the magnificent central fountain circled by imperial eagles trampling upon reptiles around the curb of the basin at the feet of a triumphant Neptune. On either side rises a dark *bosco* throwing into relief the marble benches defining the outer edge of the *rond point*. At the sea-front is a promenade, on the roof of a low boathouse facing the pier, where the Admiral may have paced up and down while scanning the horizon for an expected ship. Here he welcomed a succession of distinguished travellers and gave gala entertainments in their honour. In 1533 his employer, Charles V, returning to Spain, paid him a visit, bringing in his train young Cosimo de Medici, later to become the first Grand Duke of Tuscany. His secretary writes that Genoa was justly called the paradise of Italy, adding that the roses and other flowers grew to an unusual size and were carried by old and young in bundles rather than in bouquet. When Cosimo visited the palace again, in 1542, his galley was met in the harbour by Prince Doria who accompanied him to the private pier below the gardens.

On the road to Sampierdarena, beyond the *Villa Doria*, scaling the hillside above the railroad track



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stands a palace with a succession of terraced gardens that have an intimate charm sadly lacking at the former home of the Dorias. Known first as the *Pelagio di Orazio De Negri*, later by the name of *Scoglietto* and finally *Rolla-Rosazza*, it passed through various hands and was bought in 1848 from the Durazzo family by Signor Vitale Rosazza. It now belongs to his nephews and is classed as a national monument. Both the late Signor Rosazza and Commendatore Francesco Rolla-Rosazza, the present occupant, have loved this villa and respected its dignity, while making, from time to time, necessary restorations in such good taste that it is hard to distinguish old from new. The palace is raised high above the Piazza Negri and, on a level with the drawing-room floor, adjoins a delightful terrace. Well-kept beds gay with flowers, a pool filled with clear water, and niches ornamented with sculptured marble show the good effects of constant care. Through an arched opening in the centre a cascade is seen dashing from aloft down the dark, precipitous cliff to a subterranean grotto. The hillside is covered with a wilderness of evergreen trees and shrubs that make a decided contrast to the formal treatment below. Perched in this woodland, at a point where the view is especially alluring, emerges a little classic

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*tempietto* of charming proportions. This may have been added early in the nineteenth century when the villa was restored, with especial reference to the gardens, by Andrea Tagliafichi, the only distinguished Genoese architect of that period. At the same time some new sculpture by Nicolo Traverso was introduced on the chief terrace. For several months the unfortunate Caroline, Princess of Wales, had an apartment in the palace and here she received a visit from Pope Pius VII in 1815, before she moved to her villa on Lake Como.

When Sampierdarena was a fashionable resort the *Villa Scassi* was celebrated for its beautiful gardens while, even after they showed signs of neglect, with the trees and shrubs allowed to run wild, the pleasure grounds had a romantic charm. The palace, built in 1560, for Vincenzo Imperiale on the lowest part of the ground is adjudged to be the masterpiece of Galeazzo Alessi, the architect who laid out the Strada Nuova in Genoa and erected so many of the fine buildings there. Directly behind the palace the square plot of bare earth, now consecrated to the school-girls' games, must once have been ornamented with a box-edged parterre. At the back, the high ground is held in place by a lofty retaining wall ornamented by a triple niche formed by Atlantides. The

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hill above ascends on an even grade and at each side of the central alley are a series of quaint miniature statues and shell-like basins that must be charming when the water falls from one to another. Recently the tangle of vegetation has been completely swept away and the romantic atmosphere was destroyed by the same fell swoop. Time and Italian sun can accomplish such wonders that in the course of a few years this stark nakedness may be veiled again by luxuriant vegetation.

Many of the merchant-princes also built country-seats on the eastern heights of San Francesco d'Albero. Near the summit is another stately mansion designed by Alessi at the *Villa Cambiaso* now part of the Naval College. The chief glory of the formal grounds, leading from a forecourt with a curved marble exedra, is a long grass alley, running down the hillside on the main axis of the house and strongly defined on each side by two clipped hedges, the outer lines further accented, at intervals, by the insertion of pedestals supporting potted plants.

Of the other country-seats at San Francesco d'Albero little remains of the old gardens. In the *Villa Paradiso*, with a house in Alessi's style attributed to Andrea Ceresola, the grounds appear like an English park. Lower down the hill, the *Villa Saluzzo* shel-

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tered Byron for the few months between Shelley's death and his own expedition to Greece. The Countess of Blessington speaks of the garden behind the house. Nearer Genoa, in the depressing suburb of San Fruttuoso, the *Villa Imperiali*, supposedly the work of Montosorli, has lost its appropriate setting of terraces and walled enclosures carpeted with turf and enclosed by vine-covered pergolas.

On the height almost directly above the city, the *Villa Durazzo-Grapallo* commands a wonderful view of the harbour. Alessi may have designed the large square house, its walls frescoed with imitations of pilasters and other architectural features. Among the early owners were the Balbo and the Durazzo families. In their time the grounds had a formality in keeping with the architecture, but, during the tenure of the Marchese Grapallo, in the nineteenth century, he made sweeping changes and left nothing of the parterre next the house except a large pool and a few pieces of statuary. Below the retaining wall on the edge of the present lawn, is a double stairway flanked by lemon-houses. On this level fine trees densely shade a pleasant park. From a semicircle in line with the house, with a fountain in the centre and marble busts accenting the outer edge of the curve, there is a lovely view over land and sea.

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After condemning the villa at Pegli once belonging to the Pallavicini family and recently acquired by the government, Mrs. Wharton writes in praise of the *Villa Pallavicini alle Peschiere* above the Acquasola Gardens. The handsome house was one of those that Rubens chose to include in his collection of drawings. Here, again, disappointingly little remains of the original environment.





## CHAPTER XV

### THE LAKE DISTRICT

THE natural beauty of the scenery at the Lakes of Como and Maggiore is so exquisite that to attempt to add to its charm by artificial embellishments seems like trying to paint the lily white. This is perhaps the reason that carefully planned gardens there are few. Architecturally the most interesting is on the *Isola Bella* rising from the cerulean depths of *Lago Maggiore* against a violet background of mountains with a dreamlike loveliness that is unforgettable. From the water nothing could be more enchanting than the terraced headland standing above luxuriant masses of verdant vegetation, the red-roofed houses clustered beyond the old landing pier, and the grey stone parapets, balustrades and statues posted on high. Upon closer inspection the architectural features and the sculpture prove to be an amazing expression of Fontana's skill. Nowhere else did he have such an opportunity to express his fantastic ideas as when working here for Count Carlo Borromeo and his son Vitaliano, in the third quarter of

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the seventeenth century. The whole scheme, as can be seen from the original model, was never carried out, but the essentials, with few exceptions, are there. Unfortunately, the large palace and the formal grounds do not form part of the same composition. The centre of the scheme is a great reservoir, its walls masked by terraces and sculpture. On the side towards the palace it is screened by a fantastic Baroque erection, broken by niches containing a strange assortment of sculpture, called the *Théâtre d'Eau*. Beyond, ramps and terraced walks girdle the promontory with stone steps and balustrades. Numerous varieties of flowering trees and shrubs mantle the slopes. On a plateau below the mount there are arabesques, laid out with a carpet-bedding of foliage plants accented by palms, as was the fashion about the middle of the last century. Two little octagonal towers flanking the parterre, were used as pumping-houses. On a lower level at the north is a simpler parterre and near the round forecourt at the entrance to the palace is a semicircle with niches and statuary called, from its central figure, the Theatre of Hercules.

In contrast to *Isola Bella* the other large island of the Borromean group, *Isola Madre*, apart from a large house above terraced banks, and two intersect-



ISOLA BELLA, LAKE MAGGIORE



THÉÂTRE D'EAU, ISOLA BELLA

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

ing avenues traversing the island in opposite directions, appears destitute of important architectural features; while the only formal garden is on a small terrace near the dwelling. Beautiful specimens of trees and shrubs, many of them rare exotics, lovely vistas through woodland paths, and picturesque landing places, guarded by wrought-iron gates, contribute towards the making of a romantic paradise where nature has been wisely left untrammelled. When the rhododendrons and azaleas are covered with flowers, varying from dazzling white to every shade of rose and lavender, the riot of colour is inexpressibly beautiful.

Among the innumerable villas on the shore of the lake, Gabriel Faure describes as his favourite the *Villa San Remigio*, on the road from Intra to Pallanza. "Never, it seems to me," he writes "has Italian art as applied to gardens been carried further than here. Everywhere are terraces, statues, trim box-wood alleys, columns, marble basins, flower beds, staircases, vases, and balustrades. The charm of the place makes itself felt most on a fine afternoon in autumn. As the light fades the fragrance of the flowers increases; heavy waves of perfume, which have a strange intoxication steal over the ground. Beds of carnation are dotted over the lawns: ger-

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anum borders outline the walks. Clumps of scarlet sage gleam like the flames of a conflagration in the oblique rays of the sun; and purple gladiolas hang heavily on their long stems, as though weary. Only the statues, white against the green, seem alive in this dream landscape."

Halfway between *Lago Maggiore* and the *Lago di Como*, with *Lago di Lugano* at the north, lies the pleasant old town of Varese. Here the *Giardino Pubblico*, part of *La Corte*, a villa laid out by Francis . III of Modena in the seventeenth century, extends behind the palace, once the ducal residence and now occupied by the municipality. The spacious pleasure grounds, their lower boundary marked by an elaborately wrought, iron fence, are encompassed by tall chestnuts and elms besides banks of camelias and rhododendrons. A broad walk, between large plots of grass where there may once have been beds of flowers, rises over grassy ascents, ornamented by clipped evergreens, to a circular pool on the upper section. At the summit, a stone niche, surmounted by a gigantic figure, stands out against a background of firs and umbrella pines. In spite of having been somewhat modernized, the whole conception has a certain impressive grandeur, free from distracting details.



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No pleasanter place to break the journey between the lakes than the *Palazzo Recalcati*, now the Hotel Excelsior, can be found near Varese. It is not surprising that Verdi wrote one of his famous operas while visiting the former owners of the villa. Only the frame-work of the eighteenth century garden and a few of its outlying features have been allowed to remain. The parterre is unworthy of the fountain in its centre and the lines of the former enclosure count for nothing. There still exist, however, some pleached alleys and, beneath the shade of the fine trees below the palace, a subterranean brook runs through a series of grottoes where art has assisted nature.

In this neighbourhood one of the most beautiful gardens in northern Italy lies, a few miles away, at the *Villa Cicogna* near Bisuschio. It clings to the side of a steep hill with a view through the valley of the Brevio towards *Lago di Lugano*. Water has seldom been more successfully used for decorative purposes than here. A silvery cascade descending through a *viale* of dark cypresses dominates the scene.

The simplicity of the Renaissance mansion and the moderate size of the various out-of-door enclosures give it a homelike appearance that is especially attractive to the visitor who has grown weary of the impersonal magnificence characterizing some of the

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

show places located not far away upon the shores of the celebrated Italian Lakes. Nestling upon the slope of an Alpine foothill above the quaint little town of Bisuschio, the pleasure grounds embrace seven different levels and are restricted in most instances to narrow shelves of earth. To connect these detached units and weld them into a harmonious whole was no simple problem.

Down the declivity, descending steeply from far above the western elevation of the house, runs a very simple and effective water-stairway, the best of its type in Italy. It is neither too large nor too small to serve as a model for the ornamentation of a similar site near an unassuming English or American country-house, not necessarily purely Italian in style.

The effective stairway, with a central runnel for water, starts high up the hill in front of a small, square, arched pavilion and runs down the slope for about a hundred and fifty feet until it reaches a platform where it divides around a basin, centering on one of the second story drawing-room windows, only a few paces above the house. On the bottom of this channel, at every fifth step, is a ridge that makes the stream ripple on its downward way until it finally tumbles into a foaming basin, placed exceptionally near the edge of the landing to prevent its being con-

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

cealed from the window on the main axis of the design. Framing the margin of the steps are ranged two rows of lofty cedars, living incarnations of age and mystery. As the stairway divides, just above the basin, finishing touches are given to the lower part of the composition by the time-worn recumbent statues of two old river gods, their heads silhouetted against the trunks of the first cedars and their bodies half hidden in beds of ferns.

The main terrace is very contracted and its entire width, at the centre, is occupied by the house. This is an irregular building remodelled early in the sixteenth century, and left almost untouched since then. It encloses a square central court, faced on two sides by loggias, with ceilings frescoed in a lovely design depicting a vine-covered trellis. Opening into this courtyard, and having a southern exposure, is a charming sunken garden. The dividing line between the two is marked by low stone posts surmounted by urns and connected by loops of chain thickly garlanded with ivy. The parterre, with box-edged beds and carpets of grass ornamented with circular fountains, is practically evergreen and must appear equally delightful in winter and summer. It provides almost no opportunity for growing flowers. At one end, guarded by well-designed balustrades, are two

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

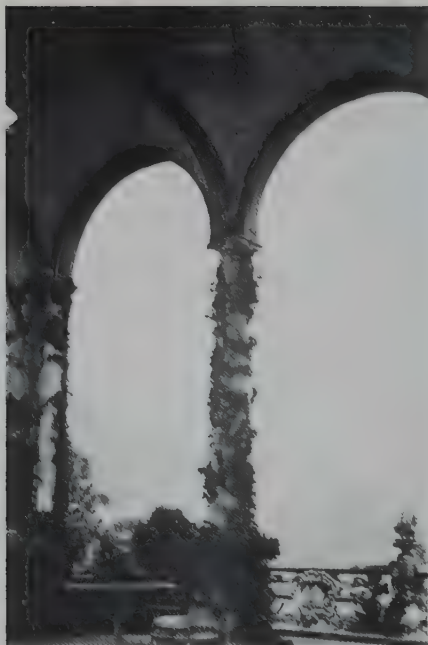
pools that are refreshing to look upon during the hot weather and may have been intended as preserves for fish. Retaining walls nearly twelve feet high, overtopped by ilex hedges, hold back the rising ground at the east and west, while there is another hedge on the eastern boundary. The ornamentation of these walls, with panels, niches and an arcaded subterranean gallery, is especially interesting. A rhythmic effect, characteristic of the Baroque period, is produced by placing the niches, enshrining busts and statues, upon alternating levels in a sort of undulating design. All the plastic features are modelled boldly enough to be effective in the open air.

A second garden, placed at the opposite end of the terrace from the one just described, is chiefly interesting, because of its beautiful setting. It lies just below the north end of the house and is open to an extensive view of rich lowlands and wooded hills against the sky, with Lake Lugano in the distance. Unfortunately the parterre is now planted chiefly with grass dotted here and there by foliage plants. Some fine trees at the end farthest from the house throw into relief urns and flower-pots that are placed on unusual ball-shaped pedestals.

Above and below this parterre, are very narrow terraces linking it with other parts of the grounds and



WATER STAIRWAY, VILLA CICOGNA, BISUSCHIO



LOGGIA, VILLA BALBIANELLO, LAKE COMO



STONE BALUSTRADE, VILLA BALBIANELLO, LAKE COMO



## THE LAKE DISTRICT

intended chiefly as promenades and vantage points for surveying the gardens and the surrounding country. Two of them are simple and wholly unadorned, the third is diversified by a succession of flower-beds. On another and lower level beyond the forecourt is a pleasant old service-yard containing a good wrought-iron well-head. Excavated from beneath the upper side of the hill lies, partly hidden, a long grotto-like gallery extending the entire length of the superimposed terrace. The interior, of rustic stonework clothed with maiden-hair fern, looks invitingly fresh and cool when the scorching sun parches the ground outside.

Shortly after the middle of the fifteenth century Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, used to visit the Mozzoni family here when he came for the annual boar-hunt. Ascanio Mozzoni, well-known as a poet and scholar in his day, began the construction of the present house and gardens, which were completed after his death and remodelled by two of his descendants early in the sixteenth century. Few changes have been made since then. The daughter of the last of the Mozzoni married Count Gian Pietro Cicogna in 1580 and the estate has remained until the present date in this family. The present owner, Count C. P. Cicogna, keeps the property in

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

good condition and hospitably admits strangers there.

The shores of *Lago di Como* are studded with a succession of interesting villas, the gardens containing at least one or two good architectural accessories. Nothing could appear more romantic than the statue of San Carlo Borromeo standing out against a dark mysterious cove at the entrance to the water stairway, protected by a carved stone balustrade, leading from the boat-landing up to the house on the bold promontory covered by the *Villa Balbianello*. The exigencies of the site, with abrupt declivities on three sides and an irregular eminence on the fourth, preclude symmetrical planning or planting, but there are terraces walled by parapets of finely carved, pierced stone and surmounted by monastic figures that have unique charm and add much to the charm of unbelievably beautiful scenery. To see the wonderful views up and down the lake at their best, one must ascend from the highest part of the lofty house, clinging closely against the cliff, to the Belvedere on the summit. Here is a vantage point for catching every breath of air in sultry weather and for enjoying views, framed by stately columns, extending up and down the gleaming lake towards the shadowy mountains that rise in majestic curves above its shores.

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

Near by, between Tremezzo and Cadenabbia, is the *Villa Carlotta*, planned for Marchese Clerici and later passing into the hands of the Sommariva family. After Princess Albrecht of Prussia purchased the estate, in 1840, she renamed it for her daughter Charlotte. On the lakeside, where the quaint Sommariva chapel still stands near the landing, the fantastic wrought-iron grilles, the circular entrance court with a large fountain, and the double stairways produce an imposing effect; but the gardens are small and unimportant. At the back of the commonplace house where the ground has been scooped from a steep declivity, above the retaining wall masses of azaleas flame in spring time and are followed by the cool rosy-lavender flowers clustering over the rhododendrons.

On the opposite side of the lake near Torno, Count Anguissola, after murdering Pier Luigi Farnese and fearful of the consequences, built the *Villa Pliniana* at about the same time that the palace was being constructed for Cardinal Gallo at Cernobbio. Pliny, who was born at Como, wrote to ask a friend to solve the problem of the intermittent ebb and flow of the spring that feeds the waterfall here and apparently for this reason the villa was given his name. Possibly this may also have been the spot about which he ques-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

tioned his friend Canninus Rufus, inquiring "What has become of the pleasant villa, the always verdant portico, the dense grove of plane-trees, that rivulet so sparkling and green, and the imprisoned lake below?" The gardens here are not remarkable; but the house, with an open loggia running through the centre, stands on a finely proportioned terrace with a view that excited Shelley's admiration. He wrote enthusiastically:—

"The scene from the colonnade is the most extraordinary, at once, and the most lovely that eye ever beheld. On one side is the mountain, and immediately over you are clusters of cypress trees of an astonishing height that seem to pierce the sky. Above you, from among the clouds as it were, descends a waterfall of immense size, broken by the woody rocks into a thousand channels, to the lake. On the other side is seen the blue extent of the lake and the mountains, speckled with sails and spires."

Not far from the town of Como, at Cernobbio, lies the *Villa d'Este* built for Cardinal Ptolomeo Gallio by Pellegrino Pellegrini in 1570. After passing through many hands it was bought, in 1815, by the unfortunate Caroline, Princess of Wales, who for some strange reason gave the villa its present name. After her final separation from her husband she spent



WATER ENTRANCE, VILLA BALBIANELLO, LAKE COMO



VILLA BALBIANELLO FROM THE WATER, LAKE COMO



WATER-RAMP, VILLA CARLOTTA, LAKE COMO



## THE LAKE DISTRICT

five or six happy years in this lovely retreat. At one end of the large bare-looking palace lies a parterre ornamented with statuary. The main path leads to a pavilion cooled by an oval fountain. Extending from here is a long vista, lined on either side by chains of water falling into a succession of innumerable basins, overshadowed by a *viale* of tapering cypresses, terminated by a grotto enshrining the fountain of Ariosto. Farther up on the hillside is a miniature Roman villa with gardens and pavilions built to seem in ruins. The rest of the pleasure grounds have been so altered as to resemble an English park.

In the neighbourhood of Bellagio there are lovely views and certain architectural features of interest, but no formal gardens of any importance. South of the town on the road to Limonta, the *Villa Giulia* or *Zena*, is laid out in the Baroque style and has terraces connected by an unusually good curved double stairway. The planting here shows good taste and there is a fine *viale* of cypresses leading down to the lake.

On the road from Bellagio to Milan, at Inverigo, there is an amazingly impressive approach to the *Villa Crivelli*. The long, grass-grown avenue, far flung across the country-side, is accented by statues and obelisks, as well as by rows of trees, to increase the effect of the protracted vista. Terraced gardens

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

lie on each side of the avenue near the house. It is an unusual place with a mellowness about the seventeenth century curves of the architecture that creates a pleasant atmosphere.

"High in lovely Italy lies a lake under those Alps that press against Germany beyond the Tyrol, its name is Benacus" wrote Dante. Known today as the *Lago di Garda* it has been a favourite haunt of the poets from Catullus to d'Annunzio. The joy of his return to Sirmio, the narrow tongue of land where now stand the picturesque Mediæval towers of the Scalighers' castle, inspired Catullus to write that exquisite ode ending: "Hail, lovely Sirmio and be joyful, you laughing wavelets of the Lydian lake also rejoice, laugh with the laughter echoing from every corner of my home."

Virgil was born on a farm lying amidst the low hills near the lake, Arrigo Boïto, the poet-musician, had a villa at Sermione and d'Annunzio has appropriated an estate on the eastern shore.

At Salò, with its profusion of oleanders and tiers of cypresses, extend the long low lines of the *Palazzo Martinengo*, the home of the Countess Evelyn Martinengo Cesaresco whose "Liberation of Italy" thrillingly describes the overthrow of Austrian domination. One of her husband's ancestors, Count Fortunato

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

Martinengo Cesaresco, visited Vittoria Colonna in Rome, the year before she died, and wrote with enthusiasm of her beautiful character and her talent for conversation. This palace was built, in 1556, by the Marquis Sforza Pallavicino, Generalissimo of the Republic of Venice. Later, when the Duke of Bracciano and Vittoria Accoramboni were received as guests here, apparently not being considered as black as they were painted, he met with death, perhaps by poison. Not long afterward she was murdered at Padua. Cammillo Martinengo Cesaresco bought the estate from the Pallavicinis, about the year 1640, and here he received a visit from Cosimo III Grand Duke of Tuscany. Cosimo spent a day in going to Maderno to look at the villa built for Vincenzo I, Duke of Mantua, in this century, but already deserted and tumbling to ruin. Count Camillo apparently had several beautiful gardens and, in his will, he speaks of the statuary and other ornaments contained there. Of the villa Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote to her daughter:—"It is seated on that part of the lake which forms an amphitheatre at the foot of a mountain nearly three miles high, covered with a wood of orange, lemon, and citron and pomegranate trees, which is all cut into walks, and divided into terraces. that you may go into; and sev-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

eral gardens from every floor in the house, diversified with fountains, cascades and statues, and joined by easy marble staircases, which lead from one to another. There are many covered walks, where you are secure from the sun in the hottest part of the day by the shade of the orange trees, which are so loaded with fruit you can have hardly any notion of their beauty without seeing them: they are as large as lime trees in England." Towards the close of the eighteenth century the palace was sacked and the statuary much injured by French soldiers, however the three colossal figures of Venus, Hercules and Apollo remain intact and, doubtless, the gardens flowered again when Count Giuseppe Martenengo renovated the palace for his English daughter-in-law.

Another even lovelier spot is the *Villa San Vigilio* on a point of land commanding views of the lake in three different directions. The construction was begun, in 1540, for the distinguished Agostino Brenzoni of Verona who entrusted the design to his compatriot Sanmichele, one of the greatest architects known to the Renaissance. He gave the gardens the castellated appearance associated with an earlier period and crowned the summit of the promontory with a circular parapet connecting twelve solidly built niches containing busts of the Roman emperors.

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

Superb cypresses both enhance the appearance of this circle and form a magnificent *viale* leading from it to the house. In the lemon-garden there is a massive pergola and a parterre planted with myrtle. At the end of the point is a small chapel dedicated to the martyred Saint Vigilio and a charming guest house, with airy loggias looking across the water to the ruined villa of Catullus on the opposite promontory of Sermione.



## CHAPTER XVI

### IN VENETIA

AS early as the sixteenth century it was customary for the rich Venetians and Paduans to pass part of the summer at their country estates. Along the shores of the Brenta, in the more bracing atmosphere of the Euganean Hills and in the picturesque neighbourhood of Vicenza and of Asolo near the foothills of the Dolomites, were numerous villas with lovely pleasure gardens. Cardinal Bembo was devoted to his "*dilettevole villetta nel Padovano*," called the *Villa Bozza*, beyond Cittadella and not far from his friend Queen Caterina Cornaro at Asolo. In one of his letters he describes the simple joys of his life at the *villetta* where no disagreeable news reached him and he could not be bothered by tiresome officials. "I hear nothing but the songs of the nightingales," he writes, "warbling from every bush in joyous rivalry, and the songs of the other birds who all do their best to please me with their divine harmonies. I read, I write; when I choose, I ride or walk, I spend much of my time in a grove at the end of a pleasant and fruitful garden, where I gather vege-



tables for the first course of our evening meal, and sometimes pick a basket of strawberries, which are not only delicious to the taste but perfume the whole breakfast-table with their fragrance. Nor should I forget to tell you that all day the garden and house, and the whole place, are full of roses."

While staying here he probably wrote "Gli Aso-lani," dedicated to his adored Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara, giving an account of the story-telling of three maidens and their attendant cavaliers and of Queen Caterina's beautiful garden, described as their meeting-place. The walls, surrounding the enclosure, were said to be completely concealed by trim hedges of box and juniper. Down the centre, through a laurel grove, a pergola led to a flowery mede where a fountain played into a marble basin. Beyond was a *bosco* where the trees, unlike those in the grove, were allowed to grow as they pleased. Here the gay party decided to rest awhile, for, as one of them remarked, "There could hardly be found a more delightful spot with gayer flowers or greener grass." The trees afforded shelter from the sun and the murmur of the trickling water and the romantic charm of the shadows would dispose them to talk freely of what interested them most.

The Castello of Caterina, Queen of Cyprus, Jeru-

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

salem and Armenia and Lady of Asolo, as she always signed herself, is now a municipal building, but the *Villa Torricella-sotto-Castello* still includes the lower part of her pleasure grounds. Below a lofty retaining wall is a beautiful garden, about a hundred and fifty feet long by eighty feet wide, with a pool and a large curving grotto underneath a terrace, sometimes used for a stage, adorned by lovely seventeenth century statues. An outer wall is pierced by arches revealing marvellous views of the Venetian plain. In a lower garden there are an orchard and swimming-pool. The ancient statues now overlook modern tennis-courts frequented by young Americans, instead of the flowery mede enjoyed by the poetic courtiers, but the new features have been pleasantly blended with the old.

Renaissance architecture in Venetia is especially interesting to Americans because not only was it an inspiration to Inigo Jones, Christopher Wren and the two Adam brothers, but to Thomas Jefferson in remote Virginia, and to Bulfinch and his contemporaries in other Georgian colonies. Almost literal reproductions, in brick or wood, of the stone and stucco edifices, with their walled gardens and their stately porticoes facing the Brenta Canal or dignifying the Euganean Hills, can be found on the



THE MINUET IN A VENETIAN GARDEN, FROM A PAINTING BY TIEPOLO



VENETIAN WATER-ENTRANCE, FROM A PICTURE BY AN UNKNOWN PAINTER

banks of the Mississippi, and in the valley of the Connecticut as well as in many parts of England. If there is a characteristic style of architecture in the eastern section of the United States its inspiration came from Venetia. Pillared porticoes, triplicate windows, with an arch over the central one, and arcaded coach-houses derived their origin from Palladian prototypes. Even the sheds and barns were painted with what is still known as Venetian red.

Palladio was born, in 1508, at Vicenza and much of his best work was executed not far from his birth-place. He based his designs upon the classic orders of architecture and his palatial country-seats, marked by imposing columns and elevated gables, maintained a serene dignity, untouched by Baroque frivolities and betraying not the faintest desire for vulgar display. In Scamozzi's "*Le Fabbriche e i disegni di A. Palladio*" the descriptions of the villa gardens do not give very realistic pictures of their appearance. Palladio himself, in his "*L'Architettura*," is equally vague. Regarding the site of the house he advises choosing either a hill with views on every side, or the bank of a river, as the water will prove not only useful but ornamental in both the pleasure and kitchen gardens "which," he adds, "are the sole and chief recreation of a villa." Dovecotes



## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

and forecourts are also frequently mentioned as being essential. He advises that the woodshed and other dependencies should be accessible from the house under cover. An idea that evidently appealed to Colonial Americans.

The only Palladian house with formal pleasure grounds of marked importance is at the *Villa Giacomelli*, at Masèr near Asolo, in the province of Treviso. The house, with its central pavilions and outlying arcades, built for Monsignore Daniele Barbero, is an exceptionally interesting example of Palladio's work. Statues enliven the walls on each side of the avenue which passes through a garden as it enters the forecourt. At the rear is a smaller courtyard, with a semicircular recess ornamented with statuary, having in the central niche a basin of running water. Palladio writes of there being two fish-ponds in the large kitchen-garden, which was filled with fruit-trees and a variety of vegetables.

At Liziera, near Vicenza, the house at the *Villa Valmarana* was never completed, although Palladio speaks of it as though his plans had been carried out. The two buildings, within the walled enclosure, are neither of them on a large scale, but they have great charm. The ivy arbours and the thick labyrinth, that were mentioned as forming part of the garden early



in the seventeenth century, have disappeared. Surmounting the wall at intervals are quaint marble dwarfs in eighteenth century costumes.

Not far from here is *Il Rotondo*, or the *Villa Capra*, on a foothill of Monte Berico. The house, with its central dome and four handsome porticoes, is sometimes considered as Palladio's masterpiece and was greatly admired by French and English architects. It was the model of Mereworth Castle, Lord Falmouth's estate in Kent. An interesting architectural screen, with pilasters and a niche containing a statue, masks the end of the farm buildings but apparently the house was never given a formal setting.

Other country-seats designed by Palladio, where he mentions there were gardens, are the *Villa Emo* at Fanzolo and the *Villa Zeno* at Casalta, in the Trevigiano; the *Villa Pogliana* on the Brenta and the *Villa Sarego* at Santa Sofia near Verona. None of these gardens have retained many old features.

At the *Villa Donà dalle Rose*, close beside the village of Valsanzibio, there is a charming little formal park that is perfect of its kind. Fine old trees shade the long grass alley that, starting in a forecourt near the simple house, extends to the extreme limit of the

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

ground. Hedges and lemon-trees in large terracotta pots, strengthen the outer lines. Halfway down, this alley intersects a series of pools that cut across the ground in the opposite direction and carry the eye either up towards some dark wooded hills, or down to a monumental gateway combined with a cool pavilion. Through the central arch of this construction is a lovely view, traversing the silvery water avenue, with high beech-hedges standing in front of the trees on either side, until the vista ends with groups of tritons and nereids rising from the water below a background of hills above hills, purple and misty blue. The park is diversified by several lesser incidents; a small formal lake enclosed by a balustrade, with an island-home for rabbits in the centre, a bewildering labyrinth, fountains and statuary. Each feature has been handled with an originality that gives it unusual interest. If ever there were flower-beds they probably occupied the grass-plots opening from the forecourt and played no important part in the general scheme. As the grounds were laid out for Antonio Barbaro, procurator of Saint Mark's in Venice, towards the end of the seventeenth century, they show evidence of Baroque influence, but without a trace of unpleasing flamboyancy.

Petrarch passed the last years of his wandering



THE GARDEN-WALL, VILLA VALMARANA, NEAR VICENZA



PAVILION, VILLA GIUSTI, VERONA



FOUNTAIN, VILLA DONÀ DALLE ROSE, VALSANZIBIO

life amidst the Euganean Hills at Arqua del Monte. His fondness for hedges of red and white roses and for other flowers, which he always cultivated with his own hands when he lingered long enough in any one place, was no secret. In the manuscript of the "Triumph of Love," illuminated at the very beginning of the sixteenth century for Louis XII of France, the poet is portrayed asleep under a latticed arbour dreaming of a lovely garden close by, where his shade is wandering over the parterre. Fortunately, his quaint little house and the garden, where he used to prune the trees and pull up the weeds, has been preserved, almost unaltered, since his death hundreds of years ago.

Only a few miles away, at Este, was the villa where the hale nonogenarian Alvise Cornaro came from Padua to spend September and October. His large gardens, ornamented with fountains, were adjoining a loggia where he used to receive his friends. There was a theatre for entertaining his guests with music or with pastoral comedies composed and enacted by Ruzzante, a favourite player. Cornaro went later to another villa on the Brenta, where the river, flowing through the garden, added greatly to its beauty. He ascribed his wonderful health largely to the fact that he spent so much of his life in the country.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

When John Evelyn visited Verona in the middle of the seventeenth century the only gardens that he mentions seeing there were at the *Villa Giusti*. In his day, the lower part of the ground was laid out with a parterre enriched by fountains and statuary. At the entrance stood a magnificent cypress, said to have been the finest one in Europe, which finally died, not very long ago, at the age of seven hundred. The flower-beds and statuary have also disappeared and the fountains are hard to find amidst a tangle of vegetation. But the glory of the villa is its ancient cypresses, clothing a rocky hillside, with a magnificent *viale* opened up through the centre. At the summit, where a pretty little brick pavilion affords shelter, there is a wonderful view of the blue Lombard plain bounded by snowy Alps; of Verona the birthplace of Virgil, and for awhile the home of Dante and Petrarch; and the historic town of Mantua barely discernible in the distance.

Among the very beautiful gardens of the Renaissance were those constructed for the Gonzagas at Mantua. Few of them, however, exist now except in the flattering descriptions of their contemporaries. Perhaps the most enthusiastic horticulturist of this era was Isabella d'Este, wife of Marquis Giovanni Francesco III. In the summer she went oc-





VILLA DONÀ DALLE ROSE, VALSANZIBIO



VILLA GIUSTI, VERONA

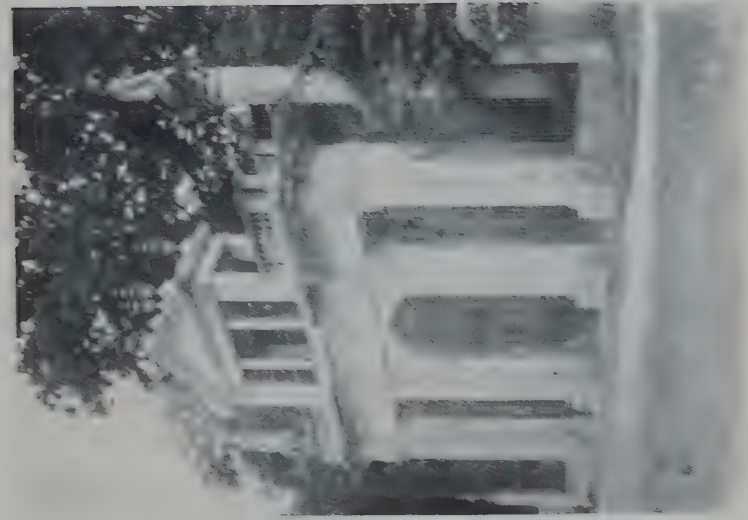
casionally to her casino on Lake Garda, but her villa at *Porto* on *Lago Superiore*, within easy reach of Mantua, was the favourite resort for her and her many learned friends. With the help of an adept head-gardener, she grew all sorts of rare trees and shrubs. Her correspondents enthusiastically praise the gardens for their gushing streams, abundant fruit and fragrant flowers, but omit any particulars as to their design. That she was interested in design is shown by the fact that she had begged Leonardo da Vinci, though in vain, to make her some drawings for a villa and commissioned Michelangelo to create some gardens for her at Marmarilo. Baldassare Castiglione brought her, from Rome, Michelangelo's plan for a villa, but it is doubtful whether it was ever carried out. Her son Federigo II built the celebrated *Palazzo del Tè* and gave Giulio Romano a free hand both inside and outside this casino, which was intended merely for recreation. Fortunately the charming horse-shoe-shaped pavilion has escaped almost unharmed and the frescoed walls, within, retain their arresting beauty. But, outside, the far-famed gardens and the two miniature lakes, where mock naval battles took place, have vanished completely.

Of the famous series of villas and pleasure resorts constructed for the Este family very little has been

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

preserved. Contemporary writers glowingly described *Belriguardo*, *Castellina*, and *Montagnola di San Giorgio*, all within easy reach of Ferrara, and ornamented by a profusion of grottoes, aviaries, pergolas and fountains amidst plantations of orange- and lemon-trees. It was for Leonello d'Este that L. B. Alberti wrote his requirements for the building of gardens, the most influential treatise on this subject published during the Renaissance period.

In the old days travellers from Padua to Venice usually went luxuriously by boat through the Brenta Canal. This was often spoken of as a delightful journey with music and pleasant company aboard the comfortable barge. John Evelyn mentions taking this trip in 1645: "We changed our barge and were then drawne up by horses thro' the River Brenta, a strait channel as even as a line for 20 miles, the country on both sides deliciously adorned with country villas and gentlemen's retirements, gardens planted with oranges, figs and other fruits belonging to ye Venetians." Several of these houses were designed by Palladio, among them the *Palazzo Malcontenta* is one of the few not completely wrecked. When Sir Henry Wotton was English ambassador to Venice he rented the *Villa Gussoni* on the Brenta at Noventa and used to go there when the weather was hot and at the time



MAIN ENTRANCE, VILLA PISANI, STRA



GATEWAY, VILLA PISANI, STRA





WELL-HEAD, PALAZZO GIOVANNELLI, VENICE



## IN VENETIA

of the vintage. He was keenly interested in both horticulture and architecture and sent seeds of plants from gardens at Chioggia to King James I of England. His little book on the "Elements of Architecture" helped to introduce the style of Palladio into England where it was most successfully reproduced by Inigo Jones. Another British subject, in a neighbouring villa at Dolo, was the Earl of Arundel, the famous collector of Italian pictures and sculpture.

Nearer Padua the princely *Villa Pisani*, at Strà shows to what architectural heights the great Venetian noblemen could rise, even as late as 1736. The architect employed there was Gerolamo Frigimelica, whose plans were somewhat altered, when partly carried out by F. M. Preti. In size the palace rivals the *Palazzo Reale* at Caserta, and even the stables are magnificent. The grounds were laid out with great formality but time has softened their outlines and the vast parterre is reduced to a sheet of water and an expanse of turf. Large trees shade the broad alleys leading to the maze, to a small temple on a mount and other interesting objectives. The secret garden would be charming if kept up a little better. There are an unusual number of gateways, ornamented stone columns and wrought-iron grilles each

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with its individual elegance. The most important one is of monumental size and includes three gateways, with an upper pavilion reached by spiral stairways winding around columns stationed on either side.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TWENTIETH CENTURY RENAISSANCE

ONE of the pleasing changes for the better, apparent since the shadow of the great war ceased to darken the face of the earth, is a renewed desire for beauty, keener and more wide-spread than ever before in our industrial age. The response to this craving is not so strikingly and happily evident in the other arts—for shining lights in sculpture, painting, and music are few and far between—as it is in architecture and in minor forms of decoration. None of these branches has developed more extensively, during the last few years, than the making of pleasure gardens.

Throughout the Italian peninsula numbers of new gardens are in process of construction, and most of the old ones are being enlarged and renovated. Among the contributory causes is the rapidly increasing influx of foreigners. Not only have the environs of large cities, such as Rome, Florence, and Genoa, become winter resorts for thousands of strangers, but in countless out-of-the-way places French, English, and Americans are becoming landed proprietors.

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In modern Italian gardens reverence for precedent dominates the design, while originality plays a very small part. Naturally, when the pleasure grounds, forming part of an ancient villa, are expanded beyond their early confines, their style is made to conform closely to precedent. With less reason, the creations belonging wholly to this day and generation are usually modelled along old lines. The seventeenth century Baroque is the latest fashion, and its novelty often lies merely in a clever reproduction of phases long despised and then forgotten. Futurism, such as characterizes exhibitions of decorative arts in France and Germany, seems less able to flourish upon Italian soil.

Resting on the hillsides that rise in tiers to bound the valley of the Arno and encircle the still quaint old city of Florence, with its aspiring domes and mediæval towers, lie a succession of picturesque dwellings endless in their number and variety. Different from each other as they appear, and expressive of markedly individual tastes, certain characteristics predominate. Mansions and farmhouses alike have stone walls, often encrusted by coloured stucco, red-tiled roofs, and wide-spreading eaves that betoken their common Tuscan origin. Not a few still retain vestiges, at least, of ancient gardens, and many



VILLA ANTINORI, NEAR FLORENCE



GREEN GARDEN, VILLA ANTINORI, NEAR FLORENCE



I TATTI, SETTIGNANO



others, too numerous to describe, have been artistically enshrined amid trees and flowers.

One of the most interesting is the *Villa Antinori*, near a little place called San Martino. It crowns the top of Monte Aguliano, an isolated hill outstanding above the broad plain, and is approached by an unfrequented road diverging from the highway connecting Florence with Prato. Passing in this direction in 1581, Montaigne, the celebrated French essayist, praised, in his journal, the broad straight thoroughfares crowded with peasants bringing their produce to market from this richly cultivated land. As early as the fourteenth century, a simple farmhouse and an adjacent chapel, both existing today, were erected on Monte Aguliano, surrounded by silvery olive groves and garlanded vineyards that still furnish remarkably good brands of oil and wine. There also remains a sloping kitchen-garden, where violets, stocks, and other flowers bloom all winter beside the spinach and artichokes, near an old stone dipping well that might date back to an early period. Successive generations of the same family have gradually increased the size of the house and added to the pleasure grounds without destroying the delightfully rustic appearance of the old farm. A box-edged parterre—in the courtyard overlooked by part of the

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ancient dwelling, and at the rear of the more pretentious addition now forming the main body of the mansion—is suggestive of the sixteenth century.

In front of the dignified and graceful seventeenth-century façade a broad terrace affords a pleasant promenade. Near by, spreading down the hillside, are modern pleasure grounds faithfully reproducing plans such as were in vogue three hundred years ago. These three charming enclosures owe their beauty to the creative imagination of the present owner, Marchese Piero Antinori, and to his talented wife, a member of the Fabbri family of New York. Connected with the terrace by a well-designed double stairway extends a large square, partly enclosed by dense walls of clipped cypress, broken by arches, and a central opening disclosing a most attractive view of the plain, with Florence patterned against the hills in the far distance. Each of the four quarters, forming a box-edged parterre, is subdivided into three large beds filled with masses of brilliantly coloured bloom standing out against the sombre background and accented by dwarf lemon-trees in terracotta flowerpots. In the centre is a round pool from which arises a marble Venus. Adjacent, another cypress-walled enclosure, forming a circle, conceals beds of roses. Beyond lies a grassy incline, which the

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Marchesa Nathalie Antinori has diversified with spur-shaped traceries outlined with box edging, recalling an old design at the Collegio Rosa near Spello. All these plans have a largeness and simplicity, unspoiled by jarring detail, that makes them worthy of study.

At San Domenico, on the hills ascending toward Fiesole, are several villas with gardens worth seeing if only because they abound in such beautiful flowers. Among them is the *Villa Buoninsegni*, where an old farmhouse has become almost palatial and new gardens have been constructed to give pleasure to its American proprietor.

*I Tatti*, the Bernard Berensons' villa at Settignano, has a particularly delightful atmosphere. At the entrance to the long grass walk leading up to the old house between rows of tall cypresses there are some stuccoed walls ornamented with designs scratched upon the surface before the cement was dry. This method of wall decoration has been commonly used for centuries in this part of Tuscany, and is so simple and effective that it might well be adopted elsewhere. The gardens, laid out on a series of terraces below the house, were planned by Mr. Cecil Pinsent, an English architect living in Florence, to be as attractive in winter as in summer. The outlines of the

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

beds and the enclosures are so clearly defined by evergreens that absence of flowers does not injure the general effect. Then there are many architectural features and pieces of statuary. Both Mr. and Mrs. Berenson have a keen sense of beauty that finds expression in their immediate environment as well as in their appreciation of the old Italian masters.

As showing how much charm and variety can be given to a small place, if laid out with good taste, the *Villa Scifanoia* at Fiesole is admirable. Here the Baroque style has been reproduced by Mr. and Mrs. Louis Einstein without being overdone. The parterre, just enough sunk below the level of the house to appear from above to good advantage, is very well planned and planted. A typically curved double stairway leads down to a flowery orchard on a lower level, where an equally typical fountain basin, of a design probably originated by the Moors and fashionable during the seventeenth century both in Spain and Italy, ornaments the central circle. The benches of carved stone strengthening the outer curves edged with box are effective. There is an airy pavilion built high enough to command an extensive and beautiful view of the wide valley. Altogether there is nothing lacking to complete these attractive grounds.



GARDEN-CENTRE, VILLA SCIFANOIA, NEAR FIESOLE



STAIRWAY, VILLA SCIFANOIA, NEAR FIESOLE





OLD POOL, LA STROZZINA, BELLOSGUARDO.



Still smaller, the *Villa Strong* on a steep acclivity near the quaint little hill-town of Fiesole, has had the best possible use made of a very restricted space by Mr. Cecil Pinsent. Built on the very edge of a steep cliff the parterre is guarded by a massive wall that gives a needed sense of security. No flowers could go better with the architecture than the cherry-red and salmon-pink blossoms of the camellias, with their firm glossy foliage, growing in the flower-pots ranged on each side of the main path. Behind the house is a fountain-niche that would have shocked most critics a few years ago before the revival of imitation stalactites had come into vogue.

Across the Arno it is almost impossible to decide which of the many pleasing villas include the most characteristic modern gardens. At *La Strozzi*, above Bellosguardo, Mrs. Dearberg has covered the hillside with ornamental plantations and enclosures where old and new features are skillfully intermingled. The great pool, surrounded by jasmine-covered stone walls of unusual height enhancing its apparent depth, appeals especially to the imagination. Above it is a group of towering cypresses, overshadowing an old wellhead and forming the background on one side of a newly planted parterre. Beyond *Poggio Imperiale*, on this same side of the river, is the *Villa*

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*Curonia* at Arcetri, with a superb cypress avenue leading up the hill to the old house, and an old-style modern garden laid out by Mr. Edwin Dodge. Several other attractive villas have been designed by Mr. Carrère, an American architect.

In Rome, notwithstanding Mussolini's revival of imperial splendours, fewer new constructions are noticeable in the environs than outside of Florence. Perhaps the largest modern garden there is at the *Villa Cassia*. Recently Count Bottaro-Costa has partly remodelled the old house and laid out a series of terraces there in the late Renaissance style, planted chiefly with roses against cypress backgrounds. On the highest terrace he has cleverly trained some old trees to focus the eye upon a charming view of Saint Peter's. In a different direction a group of farm-buildings and superb stone-pines, on a neighbouring hillside, form another of these landscape pictures. Far away in the distance, on the northern slope of Monte Mario, can be distinguished the silhouette of the *Villa Madama*, where the gardens are being vastly improved.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON THE RIVIERA

BOTH the French and Italian coasts, forming the northern confines of the Mediterranean Sea, have been richly endowed by nature. Here, even during the darkest winter months, sunshine is not a rare event as in many other parts of Europe, and the climate is so mild that, in sheltered spots, tender sub-tropical plants require little or no protection. The beauty of the steep grey, rockbound heights, rising from an intensely blue ocean, and festooned by trailing vines, gaily flowering shrubs and wind-bent ever-green trees that emerge from every crevice where they have been able to gain the slightest foothold, is enhanced by glimpses of snow-clad mountains standing out against the distant sky. Three seasons—spring, summer, and winter—seem to go hand in hand.

From an architectural standpoint, on the contrary, the most frequented resorts in this favoured region are singularly unattractive. The modern French and Italian styles are to be seen at their worst in grandiose hotels and fantastic villas designed to allure crowds

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of transient luxury-loving visitors. At a first glance it is difficult to appreciate that anyone would be tempted to linger in such surroundings unless desperately in search of health or amusement. Not far away, however, from these noisy, thickly peopled centres are quiet countrysides harbouring the secluded homes of an entirely different class of winter residents leading simple lives and often evincing a great love for flowers.

East of Genoa, on the *Riviera di Levante*, there are many small villas, but none in the Italian style that merit particular attention. At Rapallo the *Villa Cavagnaro* has a small formal garden with a lovely view. Its location, however, is practically inaccessible except for pedestrians. At Portofino the best garden is at the *Villa Carnarvon*.

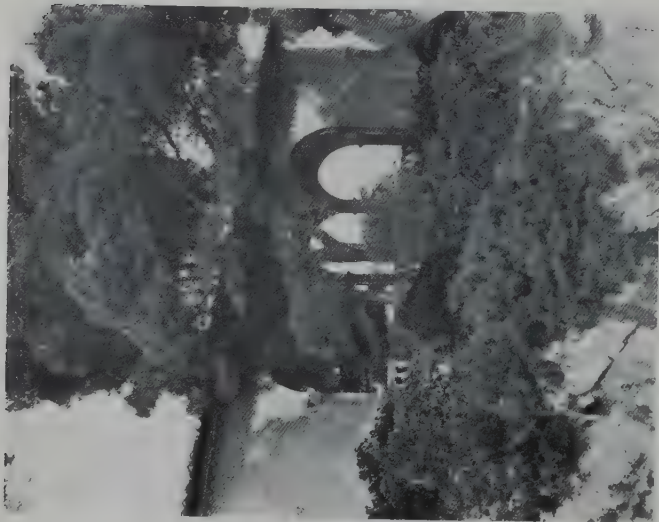
Foreigners have descended like locusts upon most of the French *Riviera* for the last fifty years and have destroyed much of its natural beauty. Here and there, however, even on the main thoroughfares, portions of the sea-shore remain comparatively unspoiled. At Beaulieu not far from Nice in the *Département des Alpes Maritimes* are one or two especially lovely spots. Perhaps the best thing that Napoleon III ever did for his country was to acquire this corner of Italy, where the Alps overlook the



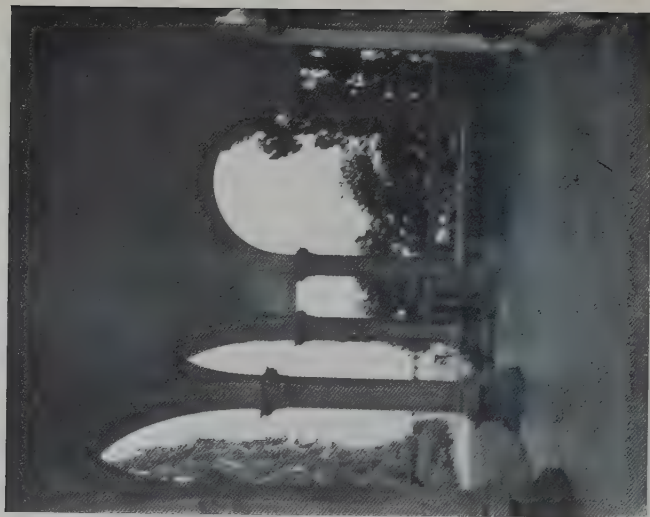
TERRACE, LA BERLUGANE, BEAULIEU



PAVILION, LA BERLUGANE, BEAULIEU



PAVILION, VILLA ROSEMARY, CAP FERRAT



INTERIOR OF PAVILION, VILLA ROSEMARY, CAP FERRAT



## ON THE RIVIERA

Mediterranean, by the Treaty of Villafranca, ten years before he forfeited Alsace-Lorraine at the close of the Franco-Prussian war. Nearly seventy years of French occupation may have resulted in the political conversion of the Italian inhabitants, but evidences of their allegiance to their former traditions in art and architecture are still apparent.

Hidden behind high walls and forbidding gateways are enchanting gardens of whose existence the casual visitor would never dream. Such carefully guarded privacy must seem shocking to many American tourists, especially to those who think that all out-of-doors should be treated like public property and who regard any attempt to define a lot line or to seclude a front yard as a selfish anti-democratic innovation. In some of our most advanced cities the slightest barrier challenges criticism; a hedge would be condemned as unneighbourly and a fence might arouse an indignation meeting. Old Europe, on the contrary, still retains aristocratic predilections. In the vicinity of Villefranche, for centuries one of the free fortified towns that made this region famous in the Middle Ages, and where Beaulieu guards the bend in a sheltered bay, stands the old villa of *La Berlugane*. Typical of its environment it covers an eminence skirted by a much travelled highway that

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is flanked by lofty walls. The mansion, at the rear of this shelving piece of ground, was erected towards the end of the Eighteenth Century by the Marquis de Villa-Marina who occupied an important position in the navy of the Italian King of Savoy. Its style of architecture recalls some of the many-storied palaces designed by Genoese architects. Subsequently the villa passed into the hands of the Count de Foresta who considerably enlarged and improved it in the Italian style.

At an earlier period the site of the villa had been known as "Le Camp des Archets" because some soldiers were stationed there in a small fortress, around which the villa was built, still existing to this day. This fortress served to prevent the disembarkation of hostile troops on the beach of Beaulieu, who otherwise could have come by sea and taken the fortified town of Villafranca by approaching it from the rear. The citadel of Villafranca, or Villefranche as it has been renamed by the French, was then the only fortified maritime port, on this war-like coast, belonging to the King of Sardinia.

In recent years *La Berlugane* has fortunately been the property of Count Gautier-Vignal, a member of an old family long resident in the neighbourhood of Nice. The original garden, according to the custom

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formerly prevalent in this vicinity, was simply a small square in front of the house, surrounded by an iron grille. The rest of the ground was used as a vegetable garden and stretched down to the sea, ending in a flight of steps. In those primitive days the highway dividing the villa from the bay was non-existent. Actually there was no means of communication between Nice and Monaco, except by water or by the Grande Corniche, on the heights far away.

With great skill and admirable taste, Count Gautier-Vignal has transformed his whole estate from utilitarian usages into a series of enchanting pleasure gardens. Each is set apart from the rest and expresses a distinctive idea, although all are filled with local atmosphere and have certain points in common. Local traditions have been the creator's inspiration and have guided him, not only in regard to colour and design, but, in his selection of trees, shrubs and plants. Cypresses, umbrella pines, Judas trees, laurels and oleanders, among the "flora classica" of this region, supply the backbone of the vegetation. Radiant masses of many-coloured roses, carnations and violets stand out against the turf and hedges of green foliage or paths and walls of cool grey stone. Nowhere do stocks, belonging to the celebrated "Beauté de Nice" variety, bloom more

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vigourously that in this sheltered spot. Plants flourish here in the open air which must be grown under glass not far away.

No easy task confronted the designer. The position of the house and the entrance to the grounds were necessarily at odds with each other and combined with the shelving character of the ground to make the establishment of central axes impossible. Count Gautier-Vignal has shown both imagination and originality in surmounting these difficulties, besides many others. As the size of the dwelling might make it appear disproportionately large in relation to the grounds, he has divided it in two by painting one half chiefly a dull Venetian red and the remainder a soft rich buff, giving it the appearance of a double house. Then, where two connecting enclosures are on different axes, he has concealed the openings between them in such a way as to cover up the discrepancies. Expert judges recently awarded the coveted gold medal to the owner in appreciation of the scheme that he had carried out so successfully.

From the entrance near the waterside road, guarded by solid wooden gates, a straight driveway leads into a large paved forecourt at one end of the stuccoed house and near the farthest boundary of the estate. Passing through an interesting stone arch,

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appended to a corner of the house, the visitor finds himself upon a spacious balustraded terrace in front of the principal façade. There is a magnificent view down to the harbour where be vies of white winged boats are always coming and going, while there are glimpses of a succession of inviting gardens beginning close at hand.

To describe the several enclosures in detail would be impossible. Various charming effects are produced very simply. One section is devoted to carnations, another contains masses of lavender edged with thyme, all misty blues and greys, a third is surrounded by dark cypress arches and ornamented by statuary. Perhaps the simplest is an oblong carpeted with grass, enclosed by an evergreen hedge, with large terracotta oil jars serving as accents. Reached from the house by a shady sunken walk are several enclosures separated from the road by a massive wall. Of these possibly the most important has an elongated pool of water extending through the centre and reflecting occasional clumps of lavender iris and pots of clipped laurel. A double stairway leads up to a raised promenade ending in a pretty little casino at the corner of the estate. From this vantage point is a wonderful view of the mountain wall rising austere ly against the northern sky above the matchless

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blue of the Mediterranean. Next to the water-garden lies another enclosure, formed by walls and hedges, merely containing four raised grass panels, outlined by stone copings and separated from each other by flagged paths centering on a sexagonal pool. A border of flowers completes a composition of marked simplicity and excellent proportions.

The large Rose Garden, in about the centre of the grounds, is relieved from becoming monotonous by iron posts and arches festooned with flowers. In the centre is a sunken circle protected by a rose-covered pavilion.

Among the architectural features perhaps the most striking is a semicircular colonnade standing on a raised stone platform at the end of a long vista. It is surmounted by characteristic stone pinnacles similar to those to be seen in other parts of the gardens.

Among the loveliest gardens on the southern coast of France are three, in the neighbourhood of Cap Ferrat, near Beaulieu and not far from Nice. They are excellent examples of Mr. Harold Peto's genius for making the most of a very limited space and of various complicated levels. He understands how and where to focus the attention and shows an unerring sense of beauty in regard to scale and colour.

The *Villa Rosemary* at Cap Ferrat, the property



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of Sir John and Lady Ward, is a charming example of Mr. Peto's style that will especially appeal to Americans. Simple in design, small in scale, and full of exquisite detail, it could readily be translated into the terms of a more northern environment. The garden, enclosed by dark yew hedges, on an oblong piece of ground perhaps three hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide, lies directly below the white-marble terrace at the back of the house. This oblong is subdivided by bands of salmon-pink roses into three squares similar in plan, but differing from each other in the way that they are planted. A wide gravel path centering on the house runs through the middle of the enclosure, from end to end. In each direction there is also a cross-path subdividing the plot into quarters.

Nothing imaginable could be easier to reproduce than the first square lying at the foot of the marble terrace. All the quarters are slightly raised and finished by stone copings. These panels are inlaid with brilliant emerald turf and each is accented by a compact round-headed orange-tree. Off on one side a quiet herbaceous border completes the ornamentation. Apart from the reddish gold fruit, the blue sky, and the grey path, different shades of green furnish practically the entire colour scheme. This

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simple treatment enhances the apparent size of the space and produces a singularly pleasant and restful impression.

In the next enclosure there is far less restraint. Grass is confined to small plots under each of the four standard trees; and masses of coppery-pink stocks, lavender godetias, snapdragons in shades of salmon-rose and buff, besides blue forget-me-nots and hosts of other flowers, are much in evidence. There is a variety of colour, chiefly in the soft pastel shades that can be gay without becoming riotous.

A venerable pine-tree, of imposing dimensions, hallows the final enclosure overshadowing the central open space and framing an airy Italian loggia. This charmingly proportioned pavilion stands on the brow of a cliff above a wild and picturesque gorge running down to the sea, and ends the long vista, through the garden, beginning at the house.

Outside the enclosing hedge ascends a wooded hillside. Here flame-coloured azaleas bloom, before the trees are heavily mantled with leaves, and the gentle slopes are tufted with golden narcissi and hosts of anemones in many shades of red and blue suggesting the ground-work of a *mille-fleurs* tapestry.

One of Mr. Peto's earliest creations on the French Riviera is the *Villa Sylvia* at St.-Jean-sur-Mer, look-

ing across the bay to Villefranche. It was designed for Mrs. Ralph Curtis and continues to be her residence. A tiled roof, of the wonderful greenish-blue colour brought to perfection in Persian pottery, makes the stately mansion easily distinguishable from afar. It stands close beside the highway and the main entrance is on the second story where the floor is level with the road.

On the ground floor there is a loggia opening into an entrancing little garden-court. Brilliant in colour, and yet cool and restful-looking, it has a jewel-like quality that excites a thrill of surprise and pleasure. The carpet is a square of velvety turf tinted a pure emerald green that harmonizes perfectly with some striking cinerarias of clear ultramarine blue and edgings of turquoise forget-me-nots. The outside borders are filled almost entirely with a grouping of cinerarias and masses of feathery, mauve primulas, while under the huge terra-cotta amphora, accenting the centre, lies a bed of lavender hyacinths. On two sides the enclosure is sharply defined by the flank of a cliff forming a wall, fifteen or twenty feet high, of solid grey rock, gracefully draped with luxuriant overhanging vines. Between the stone posts of the pergola, on the side facing the water, are interludes showing charming views of the bay, enlivened by

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little fishing-boats, hemmed in by an outlying promontory.

Below the house are two terraces gay with carefully cultivated flowers. On the upper level the border against the wall is devoted to Malmaison carnations in lovely shades of salmon-pink. The opposite band of grass is made more effective by being slightly raised and finished with a coping of small stones. At one end of the path is a carved wellhead, and at the other a fountain surrounded by calla-lilies. Lemon-trees cast their shadows across the walk, and groups of Italian cypresses stand out against the distant mountains. On the lower terrace the border is filled to overflowing with blocks of salmon-rose and buff snapdragon, coral-red pentstemon, and various flowers in different shades of blue. There are also quantities of exceptionally fine stock, two or three feet high and correspondingly bushy, raised from home-grown seed.

Less formal enclosures are somewhat hidden from the dwelling. One is surrounded by a hedge and contains tall specimens of topiary work. Another is a grassy glade shaded by large trees and invitingly furnished with wicker chairs and tables. There are many such restful spots, where lovers of seclusion need fear no unwelcome interruptions.

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In the more remote portions of the grounds nature appears to have been allowed to follow her own inclinations. Here there are groves of silvery olives that shimmer as if bathed in moonlight, mimosas letting fall showers of fluffy yellow blossoms near sturdy orange and lemon trees heavily laden with golden fruit. Occasionally rare flowering trees and shrubs or clumps of especially choice herbaceous plants catch the eye. There are Asiatic plums and cherries shrouded with misty pink blossoms, while, beneath their branches, drifts of pale-blue ageratum, coppery wall-flowers, and yellow primroses clothe the ground. Camellias, with their polished foliage and ornamental rosettes of waxy petals varying from deep reds and pinks to cream-colour, create a distinct impression. Another effective grouping consists of tree-peonies, whose silken flowers, in soft tones of crimson, bloom under boughs lightly freighted with greyish-green foliage. Winding paths edged with dwarf iris and anemones tempt the wanderer from one lovely spot to another.

Vines also play an important part in the exterior decoration. The walls of the house are ornamented by splashes of scarlet bougainvillea and sprays of purple kennedya fall over the adjacent cliff. Old favourites, such as lilac wisteria, yellow jasmine, and

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banksian roses, grow rampantly over pergolas and even climb up the trees. And where nothing else could be expected to flourish there is always the dark foliage of close-clinging ivy.

Mr. Peto's genius is also unmistakable in the planning and planting of "*Maryland*," for Mrs. Arthur Wilson at Cap Ferrat. Here his handling of the abruptly different levels has been extraordinarily clever. The entrance is through a *patio* that is below the main body of the house, so an inside stairway must be ascended to reach the first floor. This courtyard with its two-storied arcade and central fountain is both charming and unusual.

A grove of old olive-trees has been allowed to remain near the house, and beyond it is the flower garden. Here again the architect had adopted his favourite four-square plan, and has planted in the grass centre of each quarter a well-shaped standard orange-tree. The charming little pavilion, with marble steps descending into a rectangular pool, is similar to the one at the *Villa Rosmarino* above Mentone. In the circle at the intersection of the paths is an old oil-jar. The borders surrounding the grass plots in each bed are filled with a profusion of exquisite schizanthus, nemesia, pink salvia, and other



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tender annuals seldom brought to such surprising perfection out of doors except in this remarkably favourable climate.

At Mentone the *Villa Rosmarino* on the Boulevard de Garavan above the sheltered *Baie de la Paix* is in the old part of the town. This estate once belonged to the Duke of Sutherland and he built the house, an airy structure not marked in style, elevated on a narrow ledge projecting below an almost perpendicular cliff. From this commanding position are magnificent views of the Mediterranean and of some of the most beautiful portions of the *Côte d'Azur*.

The interesting series of terraced gardens that form delightful promenades and open-air living-rooms above and beneath the house were laid out by the present owner, Mr. G. Thorpe Wilson, like his predecessor an Englishman. He suggested the designs of the architectural features, chose the statuary, and made out the list of flowers besides being practically his own head gardener.

On the sunny side of the house, directly below a stairway leading down from the principal living-rooms, is a pretty little terrace, laid out with gravel paths, a central bed and borders filled with only two or three kinds of flowers, chiefly annuals. Most strik-

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ing are masses of blush pink snapdragons edged with amethyst-blue violas. Other less hardy plants flourish here out of doors in the early spring.

The most important architectural construction is a charming miniature cloistered court-yard only thirty-six feet square on the outside. It was partly inspired by one designed by the distinguished English architect Mr. Harold Peto. The proportions of the cloisters at the *Villa Rosmarino*, the soft shade of the stucco walls and the red-tiled roof partly masked by climbing roses, form a pleasing picture. Box edging has been planted directly under the eaves since it survives uninjured when torrents of water pour down from the roof. Bushes of grey-green lavender, with misty blue flowers, furnish cool accents on each side of the brick paths at the entrances. The graceful statue of Venus rising above the fountain basin in the centre of the courtyard adds a pagan touch of gaiety to its monastic environment.

Beyond the cloisters is an oblong grass-plot planted with lemon-trees. The colour of their fruit and their somewhat irregular habit of growth make them decidedly more decorative than orange-trees, although the latter stand cold better. In some places oranges can remain unprotected even in midwinter with little risk, while lemons would suffer greatly if not housed.

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In the last of this particular series of enclosures the turf is bordered with flowers kept outside the gravel path by a coping of brick laid on edge. At the end of the walk beginning at the cloister is a charming little classic pavilion in the style of the Italian Renaissance with simple columns and a Palladian arch in the centre. The small casino on the highest level of the pleasure grounds at the *Villa Lamte*, not far from Viterbo, is similar though more elaborate and on a rather larger scale.

Steep flights of stone steps link together the various platforms intended to harbour ornamental vegetation. The chief of these picturesque stairways, guarded by slender cypresses, is shown in the photograph. It leads to several upper terraces where there are trim hedges and evergreen archways, besides interesting pergolas with different kinds of columns made of stone or cement and overhanging rafters partly veiled by clinging vines. No one can fail to remark that the beauty of a sea view is greatly enhanced when the dominating horizontal lines are thus broken by columns placed at intervals in the foreground.

Not far from Mentone, across the Italian frontier and above Ventimiglia, is *La Morola*, a beautiful estate of vast extent that has belonged to the well-

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known English Hanbury family for two generations. Primarily it was intended by the late Sir Thomas Hanbury as a repository for the many varieties of rare and exotic trees, shrubs and plants that will grow under exceptionally favourable conditions on this sheltered hillside sloping down to the Mediterranean.

In order to encourage the love of horticulture Sir Thomas Hanbury left a fund, generously administered by his son, for the distribution of seeds saved from rare plants at *La Mortola*. Over a thousand packets are given away annually. Lists of these seeds are also sent out, with no charge even for postage, to all institutions or individuals who apply for them to the present owner, Mr. Cecil Hanbury.

Villas containing more interesting architectural features and less devoted to the cultivation of exotic plants than *La Mortola* are constantly increasing in number. Among the best planned and planted might be named the Villa Bellavista at Mentone, the Villa Cypres at Cap Martin, and the Villa Provençale at Nice. Monsieur Duchêne, the distinguished French landscape-architect, has recently designed a charming Italian parterre outlined and accented with evergreens, for Monsieur and Madame Balsan at Eze-sur-Mer a quaint old Saracen village high



CLOISTERS, VILLA ROSMARINO, MENTONE





ROSE-ARCHES, VILLA ROSMARINO, MENTONE



## ON THE RIVIERA

above the Mediterranean. These hill-towns, now frequented by writers and artists, have become a happy hunting ground for lovers of small gardens.





## APPENDICES

### LIST OF GARDENS AT POMPEI

The traveller whose stay is limited to a few hours had better employ one of the official guardians as his guide or study a plan very carefully. Few of the doors opening into the houses and gardens are left unlocked and only authorized officials are privileged to unbar these entrances. Each of the large sections of the town is a numbered *Regione*, subdivided into blocks or *Insulas*, where again a number is given to each house. The entrances, however, are sometimes difficult to find as they are occasionally on alleyways instead of being at the front of the dwelling abutting on one of the larger thoroughfares. Gardens, also, may be hidden in unexpected places.

Most of the interesting gardens are in the Sixth Region or in the New Excavations (*Scavi Nuovi*). The best are starred on the list. Additional enclosures are being planted every year, so the wise traveller will apply to Professor Spano for information regarding the latest developments if his guide proves ignorant in such matters.

#### REGIONE VI

*Casa del Chirurgo*, Strada di Consolare, Insula 1, No. 10. One of the oldest houses with a Tuscan atrium, garden unplanted.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

*Casa di Sallustio*, Strada di Sallustio, Insula 2, No. 4. Another larger example of the earliest type, with a peristyle in addition to the atrium. Interesting wall-painting at back of small peristyle.

*Casa del Fauno*, Vico di Mercurio, Insula 12, No. 2. A palace with three courtyards, occupying an entire insula.

*Casa del Poeta Tragico*, Strada della Fortuna, entrance on Strada della Fullonica, Insula 8, No. 3. On a miniature scale.

*Casa di Pansa*, Strada della Fortuna, Insula 6, No. 1. Vegetable garden at back of lot.

\* *Casa dell' Ancora*, Strada di Mercurio, Insula 10, No. 7. Garden unusual.

*Casa della Fontana Grande*, Strada di Mercurio, Insula 8, No. 22. Mosaic niche, for fountain with tragic masks. Garden unplanted.

*Casa della Fontana Piccola*, Strada di Mercurio, Insula 8, No. 23-24. Mosaic niche, for fountain with comic mask. Garden unplanted.

*Casa di Meleagro*, Insula 9, No. 2.

*Casa di Castore e Polluce*, Strada di Mercurio, Insula 9, No. 6. Interesting walls paintings and mosaics. Garden small.

*Casa di Apollo*, Strada di Mercurio, Insula 7, No. 23.

\* *Casa del Laberinto*, Vico di Mercurio, Insula 11, No. 10. Large garden planted with a design outlined in box.

## APPENDICES

\**Casa dei Vettii*, Vico Scienziale, Insula 15, No. 8.  
On the corner of the Vicolo di Mercurio. An unusually finished garden in the peristyle.

*Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, Strada Stabiana, Insula 16, No. 7.

\* *Casa delle Nozze d'Argento*, Vico di Mercurio, Insula 2, last door on the right.

## REGIONE IX

*Casa del Centenario*, Strada di Nola, Insula 8, No. 6.

*Casa di Marco Lucrezio*, Strada Stabiana, Insula 3, No. 5.

## OUTSIDE THE PORTA DI ERCOLANO

*Casa delle Colonne in Mosaico*, entered from Strada de Sepolcri, No. 12.

*Villa di Diomede*, entered from Strada de Sepolcri, No. 24. The garden is very interestingly planned but not planted. This is the best example of a villa near Pompeii.

*Villa Item*, or *Casa dei Misteri*. Nearly an eighth of a mile from the *Villa di Diomede*. Interesting especially on account of the wall paintings. Considered by Wilhelm Engelmann, author of one of the newest and best Guides to Pompeii as the sight most worth seeing there.

The various exedras on the Strada de Sepolchri will

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

repay study. One of the best is under a semi-circular niche. Some of the monuments, also, are well-designed.

### SCAVI NUOVI OR RECENT EXCAVATIONS

*Casa di Trebio Valente*, Via dell' Abbondanza, north side, Insula 2, No. 1.

*Casa dell' Efebe in Bronzo*, Via dell' Abbondanza, south side, Insula 7, No. 12. A beautifully painted triclinium and fountains in the unplanted garden.

\* *Casa di Lorio Tiburtino*, Via dell' Abbondanza, south side, Insula 5, No. 2.

*Casa del Criptoportico*, Via dell' Abbondanza, south side, Insula 6, No. 2. A curious, unplanted, sunken garden.

*Casa dei Paesaggi Egizi*. Via dell' Abbondanza, south side, Insula 6. a. The wall paintings in the garden are especially good.

There are many interesting features connected with several other houses in this section, including wall-paintings, fountains, pavements and statuary.



## GARDEN ITINERARY

NONE of the private gardens on this list are always open to the public and to some of them access is usually denied to strangers. The best plan is to write to ask the owner for permission to see each particular villa, unless it is specified as being opened freely to visitors. Even those noted as exceptions to the rule may change hands and become inaccessible, no suggestions, therefore, are of permanent value. Tickets to certain Tuscan villas can be purchased upon application to the tourist offices in Florence. Permissions may also be procured through the Library for American Studies on the Corso in Rome.

### SICILY

The best formal gardens in Sicily are near Palermo. This section also includes the most interesting cloisters.

In *Palermo* at the south end of the Marina, lies the *Villa Giulia*, laid out as a public park in 1777, next the Botanic Garden. There are some good pleached alleys and sub-tropical vegetation.

Outside *Palermo*, *La Favorita*, a royal villa four miles from the Porta Maqueda, laid out in the so-called Chinese style by Ferdinand IV, is of no particular interest from an architectural standpoint.

At *Monreale*, about four and a half miles above *Palermo*, cloister of the former Benedictine Monastery.

At *Bagheria*, eight miles east of *Palermo*. The *Villa Palagonia* and the *Villa Valguanera* are near each other

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

and can both be reached by following the main street a short distance beyond the town.

At *Cefalù*, about forty-two miles east of *Palermo*, Cloisters of *Duomo*.

### NAPLES AND ITS VICINITY

*Naples* is the most convenient centre for visiting the gardens of southern Italy; only a few are of any importance.

*Villa Nazionale*, a public park on the water-front, contains a few attractive eighteenth century pavilions and a classic granite fountain-basin brought from *Pæstum*, besides the unusually interesting Aquarium.

Church of *Santa Chiara*, Strada S. Trinita Maggiore, cloister built by Robert the Wise in 1310 and re-modelled in the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Villa Floridiana*, at *Vomero*, above *Naples*, near the station of the Funiculare di Chiaia. Built by Ferdinand IV for the Duchess Floridiana early in the nineteenth century and now the property of Mr. Harrison. An open-air theatre, a camelia-grove and a superb view are the chief attractions.

Monastery of *San Martino*, at *Vomero*, erected in 1325 but remodelled in the seventeenth century and now a public museum containing specimens of decorative art. Beautiful cloisters and remarkable view from the *Belvedere*.

*Museo Nazionale*, contains an unsurpassed collection of works of art from *Pompeii*, including statuary, mosaics and frescoes found in the gardens there.

At *Portici*, five miles from *Naples* on the very bad

## GARDEN ITINERARY

road to *Pompeii*, *Palazzo Reale*, now used as an Agricultural College. Grounds accessible but sadly neglected.

At *Ravello*, above *Amalfi* on the *Gulf of Salerno*, *Palazzo Rufalo*, a Saracen castle with a small garden and one of the finest views in Europe.

On the island of *Capri* are several picturesque gardens with typical pergolas, but no other architectural features of especial interest. All are comparatively modern.

At *Caserta*, twenty miles from *Naples* on the road to Rome, *Palazzo Reale* partly used as a barracks. Always open, but special permission for a visit to the garden of the *Castelluccio* must be obtained from the Director. He may be away on Sundays.

## ROME AND ITS VICINITY

### IN ROME

*Villa Albani*, or *Torlonia*, a short distance outside the *Porta Salaria*, on the *Via Salaria*. When actually the residence of the On. Benito Mussolini access is difficult. Owned by Principe di Torlonia.

*Villa Borghese*, or *Umberto Primo*, entrances near the *Piazza del Popolo* and on the *Pincian Hill*. Open from nine o'clock until dusk. The formal gardens are near the *Casino* and the *tempietto* is in the *Giardino del Lago* connected by a bridge with the *Pincian Gardens*.

*Villa Cassia*, two or three miles outside the *Porto del Popolo* on the *Via Cassia*. Owned by Conte Bottaro-Costa and never open to the public.

*Villa Chigi*, about two miles outside the *Porto Salaria*, on the road turning to the right from the *Via Salaria*,

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

beyond where the Villa Savoia stands at the left. Owner Principe Chigi.

*Villa Colonna*, entrance 15 *Via XXIV Maggio*. Permission obtainable at the *Palazzo Colonna*, 53 *Piazza Santi Apostoli*. Admission five lire. Gardens open only on Wednesday from 10 A. M. to 4 P. M.

*Villa Corsini*, entrance 24 *Via Corsini*, Permission obtainable from the Secretary of the *Reale Istituto ed Orto Botanico*, which occupies part of the palace.

*Villa Doria-Pamphili*, outside the *Porta San Pancrazio*. Permission obtainable at Palazzo Doria, on the *Corsa Umberto Primo* almost on the corner of the *Piazza di Venezia*.

*Villa Farnesina*, in the *Lungara* opposite the *Villa Corsini*.

*Villa Madama*, outside the *Porta del Popolo* on the road to the left beyond the bridge, called *Ponte Molle*, leading to *Monte La Farnesina*, a spur of *Monte Mario*. As the Villa is a national monument the grounds are open to the public twice a month, usually on the first and fifteenth. Owner Conte d'Entrice di Frasso.

*Villa Mattei*, or *Celimontana*, on the *Piazza della Navicella* outside the *Porta San Sebastiano*. Permission given by Il *Provviditore Generale*, Ministero delle Finanze, *Via XX Settembre* from 11-12 A. M.

*Villa Medici*, at top of *Via Sebastiana*, north of the Spanish Steps. Open on Wednesday and Saturday from 10-12 A. M. and from 2-5 P. M. Ask guardian to open door to upper garden in order to see view from *Belvedere*.

*Villa di Papa Giulio*, outside the *Porta del Popolo*, on the *Vicolo del Arco Oscuro* diverging on the right from

## GARDEN ITINERARY

the *Via Flaminia*. Museum of Etruscan Antiquities. Open on week days from 10 A. M.-4 P. M. and on Sundays from 10 A. M.-1 P. M.

*Villa di Priorato di Malta*, or *Villa Malta*, on the *Aventine Hill*, 40 *Via Sabina*. Open on Wednesday and Saturday or other days by giving tip to porter.

*Villa Wurts-Sciarra*, on *Monte Gianicolo* off the *Via Giacomo Medici*. Permission sometimes obtainable from the owner, Mrs. George W. Wurts, Palazzo Anticimattei, 31 *Via Funari*, Rome.

*Casino di Giulio III*, on the corner of the *Via Flaminia* and the *Vicolo del Arco Oscuro*. Owner Signor Ugo Jandolo. Permission to enter usually given by the porter. A good small garden.

*Vatican Gardens*, entrance at left of *Saint Peter's* near ticket office of Vatican Gallery. Obtain permission from the Prefetto dei Palazzi Pontificali whose office can be reached from the Cortile del Forno, where there are soldiers on guard.

*Orti Farnesiani*, or *Farnese Gardens*, On the Palatine Hill. Entrance on the *Via S. Teodoro*. Open to the public.

*Bosco Parrasio*, near the corner of the *Via di Porta S. Pancrazio* just below the Fountain of S. Paolo. Special permission from tenant necessary.

*Palazzo Farnese*, *Piazza Farnese*. Garden unimportant, visible from courtyard. No permission requisite.

*Palazzo Sacchetti*, 66 *Via Giulia*. Plan of courtyard and garden at rear interesting, but unpretentious.

*Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme Diocleziane*, *Piazza delle Terme*. Cloisters designed by Michelangelo. Open week days 10 A. M.-4 P. M. Sundays 10 A. M.-1 P. M.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Basillica of *S. Giovanni Laterano*, *Piazza di S. Giovanni in Laterano*. Cloisters entered from inside church.

Church of *Santi Quattro Coronati*, *Via de' Santi Quattro* near *S. Giovanni in Laterano*. Cloisters.

Church of *S. Lorenzo fuori-le-Mura*, near the *Porta S. Lorenzo*. Cloisters.

Church of *S. Paolo fuori-le-Mura*, outside the *Porta S. Paolo*. Cloisters.

## ON THE ALBAN AND SABINE MOUNTAINS

### FRASCATI

The simplest way to see these villas is to take a guide in the town who can get permission for most of them.

*Villa Aldobrandini*, near the *Piazza Romana*.

*Villa Torlonia*, near *Piazza Romana*. Permission can be obtained from Il Principe Torlonia, 10 *Via Sallustiana*, Rome, after 3 P. M.

*Villa Borghese*, on *Via Villa Borghese* nearly a mile outside town. Permission from administrator of Parisi Estates, 4 *Via S. Martino*, Rome.

*Villa Falconieri*, above the *Villa Borghese*, on the opposite side of the road. Permission from Amministrazione Sequestrataria in the *Piazza Romana*.

*Villa Lancelotti*, near the *Piazza Romana*. Never shown to strangers.

*Villa Mondragone*, not far from the *Villa Falconieri*, lower entrance on the road to *Palestrina*.

*Villa Muti*, about a mile outside the town on the *Grottaferrata* road.



## GARDEN ITINERARY

### CASTEL GANDOLFO

*Papal Palace, Piazza Plebiscito.* Permission can sometimes be obtained through one of the Papal authorities in Rome.

*Villa Barberini,* southern edge of town. Permission required from Prince Barberini in Rome.

### ALBANO

*Palazzo Municipio,* almost opposite tramway station, small garden and fine *viale* of stone-pines behind the building.

### TIVOLI

*Villa d'Este,* west of the town, near the central piazza. Open to public.

### NEAR TIVOLI

*Hadrian's Villa,* on the road from Rome about three and a half miles from Tivoli. Open to the public. Interest chiefly archæological.

### SUBIACO

Monasteries of *Santa Scholastica*, about a mile outside the town. Cloisters in all three monasteries.

*Sacro Speco,* above *Santa Scholastica.* Rose Garden, historically interesting.

### CASAMARI

*Cistercian Monastery.* Cloister. Five miles from *Veroli.*

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

### SONNINO

*Cistercian Convent of Fossanova*, a mile north of station, Cloisters.

### BETWEEN ROME AND FLORENCE

#### BRACCIANO

*Castello*, on main street. Visitors sometimes admitted to gardens.

#### VITERBO AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

*Monastery of S. Martino al Cimino*, about four miles from *Viterbo*.

#### BAGNAIA

*Villa Lante*, on edge of town. Visitors usually admitted. Owner Duca di Lante.

#### CAPRAROLA

*Villa Farnese*, above town. Permission obtainable from Signor Germani, Administrator of the Farnese Estates, 87 Via Seminario, Rome. Open only Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 9 A. M.—12 A. M. and 2 P. M.—5 P. M.

#### BOMARZO

*Villa Borghèse*, below the town, which is remote from any railroad station and lies between *Bagnaia* and *Orte*. Always accessible.

#### TOSCANELLA

*Bishop's Palace*. Good garden-court.

## GARDEN ITINERARY

### PERUGIA AND ITS VICINITY

*Giardino del Frontone*, just outside the *Porta S. Pietro*, on a continuation of the *Corso Cavour*. Open to public.

*Villa Colle al Cardinale*, some distance outside. Ask proprietor of hotel for directions and to telephone to villa to obtain permission.

### ASSISI

*Church of S. Maria degli Angeli*, below the town. *Roseto*, chiefly interesting on account of associations.

*Franciscan Monastery*. Cloister. Usually accessible.

### SPELLO

*Collegio Rosa*. Previous permission probably unnecessary.

### CITTA DI CASTELLO

*Palazzo Vitelli a Porta St. Egidio*, opposite the railroad station. Permission to visit garden not difficult.

*Castello Bufalini*, at *S. Giustino*, not far away.

### NEAR MONTEPULCIANO

### PIENZA

*Palazzo Piccolomini*, near the *Duomo*. Usually accessible.

### S. QUIRICO D'ORCIA

*Orti Leonini*, at end of main street. Usually accessible.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

### URBINO

*Orto Botanico, Via Bramante.* Usually open.

### NEAR SIENA

*Villa Bargagli-Pogarello*, outside the *Porta Camollia* on the *Via Fiorentina*. Not very important.

*Villa Belcaro*, two miles outside *Porta S. Marco*. Usually visible in afternoon. Permission obtainable in winter from Cav. G. Camaioli, Palazzo Camaioli, 22 *Via Camollia*, Siena.

*Villa Celsa*, west of *Porta Camollia* beyond *S. Colomba* and about eleven miles from *Siena*.

*Villa Cetinale*, south-west from the *Porta S. Marco*, eight and a half miles from *Siena*.

*Monte Oliveto Maggiore*, Benedictine Monastery, twenty-one miles from *Siena*. Open to public.

*Villa Gori* or *La Palazzina*, one and a half miles outside the *Barriera S. Lorenzo*. Owner Conte Gori Pannilini, Villino Gori-Pannilini, Lizza, Siena. Visitors usually admitted.

*Villa Mischatelli*, outside the *Porta Camollia*, off the *Via Fiorentina* on the *Via Marciano*. Owner Marchesa Mischatelli, Palazzo Bonaparte, Piazza di Venezia, Rome. Gardener sometimes admits visitors.

*Villa Sergardi* or *Torre-Fiorentina*, not far outside the *Porta Camollia* on the *Via Fiorentina*. Owner Barone A. Sergardi-Biringucci. Permission essential.

*Villa Vicobello*, outside *Porta Camollia* on a road diverging from the *Via Fiorentina*. Owner Marchesa Chigi, 8 *Via Riccasoli*, Siena. Sometimes shown without previous permission.

## GARDEN ITINERARY

### FLORENCE

*Boboli Gardens*, at the *Palazzo Pitti*. Open on Thursdays and Sundays, from noon to 7 P. M.

*Palazzo Corsini*, 50 *Via del Prato*. *Principe Corsini*. Not open to public.

*Palazzo Medici* or *Riccardi*, *Via Cavour*. Usually open.

*Palazzo Capponi*, *Via Gino Capponi*. Simple garden at rear usually open.

*Museo di S. Marco*, formerly a monastery. Cloisters. Open daily.

*Torre di Bellosguardo*, at *Bellosguardo*. Not open to public.

*La Strozzeria*, on left bank. Not open to public.

*Villa Medici di Careggi*, above *Ponte a Rifredi*.

*La Pietra*, near the top of the *Via Bolognese*. Owner Mr. Arthur Acton.

*Villa Salviati-Turri*, on the road leading from the *Via Bolognese* to *S. Domenico*. Owner Signor Turri.

### NEAR FLORENCE

#### FIESOLE

*Villa Medici*, below the town. Not open to public.

*Villa Strong*, next to *Villa Medici*. Not open to public.

#### SAN DOMENICO

*Villa Palmieri*, off the *Via Boccaccio*. Apply for permission to Signor C. M. Girard, *Via degli Orti Oricellari*, Florence.

*Villetta*, a part of the *Villa Palmieri*.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

### SETTIGNANO

*I Tatti*, near the *Ponte a Mensola*, on the *Via Giovanni Leader*. Owner Mr. Bernard Berenson. Never shown without previous permission.

*Villa Gamberaia*, half a mile above the town. Owner Baroness von Ketteler. Only shown once or twice a month.

### ARCETRI

*Villa Capponi*, 84 *Via Vincenzo Viviani*. Not open to public.

*Villa Curonio*, *Via S. Maria Celeste*. Permission sometimes obtainable from Signor Romanelli, Arcetri.

### SESTO-FIORENTINO

*Villa Corsi-Salviati* or *Guiccardini*, on the high-road. Permission obtainable from the Amministrazione, Palazzo Guiccardini, 67 *Via Ghibellina*, Florence.

### CASTELLO

*Villa Corsini*, on the road to the *Villa Petraja*. Permission obtainable from Amministrazione, Palazzo Corsini, 50 *Via del Prato*, Florence.

*Villa Reale di Castello*, on the high road. Permission from Amministrazione, Pitti Palace, Florence.

*Villa Reale di Petraja* near previous *Villa*. Permission from Amministrazione, Pitti Palace, Florence.

### SAN CASCIANO BETWEEN FLORENCE AND PERUGIA

*Cigliano*, mile north of town. Owner Marchese Ludovico Antinori.



## GARDEN ITINERARY

*Corti*, near station. Permission from Amministrazione, Palazzo Corsini, 50 Via del Prato, Florence.

*Poggio Torselli*, half a mile east of town.

### VAL D' EMA

*Villa ai Colazzi*, at Tavernuzze on a hill south of the *Ema* several miles beyond the *Certosa*. Owner Signora Beatrice Chierichetti.

*Certosa di Val d' Ema*, near Galluzzo. Open to public.

### LASTRA A SIGNA

*Villa Bellosguardo*, formerly *Campi-Caruso*. Above *Lastra* and very inaccessible. Owner Signor Eduardo Bianco. Permission essential.

### POGGIO A CAJANO

*Villa di Poggio a Cajano*, on the main road between *Florence* and *Prato*. Open to public.

### LUCCA

*Palazzo Controni-Pfanner*, near *S. Frediano*. Garden always accessible.

*Palazzo Celanni*, diagonally opposite *Duomo*. No formal garden.

*Palazzo Bottini al Giardino*. Garden ruined.

### NEAR LUCCA

*Villa Bernardini, Saltocchio*, a few miles from *Lucca*. Owner Marchesa Mansi, Palazzo Mansi, Via Gallitasi, Lucca.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

*Villa Mazzarosa, Segromigno*, hardly a mile from *Saltocchio*. Owner Marchesa Mazzarosa.

*Villa Mansi, Segromigno*, next door to preceding *villa*. Owner Marchesa Mansi.

*Villa Torrigiani, Camigliano*, perhaps a mile from *Villa Mansi*. Owner Marchesa Torrigiani, who frequently admits strangers to the gardens.

*Villa Reale, Marlia*, about a mile from *Villa Bernardini*. Owner Countess Pecci Blunt at 32 rue de Babylone, Paris, part of the year. Gardens usually accessible.

*Villa Garzoni*, at *Collodi*, not far from *Pescia*. Open to public.

## GENOA

*Palazzo Lecari-Parodi*, 3 Via Garibaldi, built by G. B. Castello (Il Bergamesco), in 1567.

*Palazzo Raggio-Podesta*, 7 Via Garibaldi, built by G. B. Castello for Niccolo Lomellini, in 1563. Ninfeo by G. Parodi.

*Palazzo Doria-Tursi (Municipio)* Via Garibaldi, built by Rocco Lurago, in 1564.

*Palazzo della Regia Università*, 5 Via Balbi, built by Bartolomeo Bianco for Paolo Balbi, in 1623.

*Palazzo Balbi-Senarega*, 4 Via Balbi, begun by Bartolomeo Bianco and finished by Pier Antonio Corradi. Garden-court with fountain and grotto.

*Villa Doria, Fassoli*, near Railroad Station. Always open.

*Villa Rolla-Rosazza*, or *Rosazza, Piazza Negri*. Owner Commendatore Francesco Rolla-Rosazza. Visitors usually admitted upon application to the gardener.

## GARDEN ITINERARY

*Villa Scassi* or *Imperiale*, *Sampierdarena*, a short drive from Genoa. A public park.

*Villa Cambiaso*, *San Francesco d' Albero*, a suburb. Used by Naval College. Visitors admitted.

*Villa Imperiali*, *San Fruttuoso*, another suburb.

*Villa Durazzo-Grappallo*, *Piazza Manin*, above Genoa. Visitors sometimes admitted.

*Villa Palavicini di Peschiera*, above the *Acqua Sole Gardens*. Not highly recommended now.

## MILAN AND ITS VICINITY

*Monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie*, *Corso Magenta*. Cloisters. Open to public.

*Certosa at Pavia*, about eighteen miles from Milan. Cloisters. Open to public.

## VENETIA

### ASOLO AND ITS VICINITY

*Villa Torricella-sotto-Castello*, near the old castle. Owners Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Beach. Not open to public.

*Villa Giacomelli*, at *Masè*. Usually accessible.

## VICENZA

*Palazzo Quirini dall Ore*, not far from the *Piazza*. Usually accessible.

*Villa Capra*, or *Il Rotondo*, at *Liziera*, a mile or two outside *Vicenza*. Often accessible.

*Villa Valmarana*, at *Liziera*, near *Il Rotondo*. Not open to public.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

### PARMA

*Giardino Pubblico*, adjoining the river. Always open.

### VENICE

There are no gardens here of any importance that are accessible to strangers. The walls, statuary, well-heads and water doorways visible from the canals are the most interesting features from an architect's standpoint.

### PADUA

*Orto Botanico*, near the *Duomo*, usually open.

*Palazzo Giustiniani*, 21 *Via Cesarotti*. Two garden-houses that belonged to *Alvise Cornaro*.

*Prato della Valle* or *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II*, approached by the *Via delle Torricelle*.

### STRA

*Villa Pisani* or *Nazionale*, on the *Brenta Canal*, about ten miles from Padua. Open to public.

### ARQUA DEL MONTE

*House of Petrarch*. Usually open to public.

### VALSANZIBIO

*Villa Donà dalle Rose*, on edge of town which is about twenty miles from Padua.

## GARDEN ITINERARY

### VERONA AND ITS VICINITY

*Villa Giusti, Via Giardino Giusti.* Usually accessible.

*Villa Cuzzano, at Grezzana,* a few miles from *Verona*.  
Owner who often admits strangers.

### MANTUA

*Corte Reale, Piazza Sordello.* Open to the public.

*Palazzo del Tè,* just outside the *Porta Pusterla*.

### FERRARA

*Castello Vecchio,* at the end of the *Via Giardini.* Open to public.

## IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

### LAGO MAGGIORE

*Isola Bella,* near *Stresa* and *Baveno.* Visitors usually admitted to the gardens.

*Isola Madre,* halfway between *Pallanza* and *Stresa.*  
Gardens open to visitors.

*Villa San Remigio,* on the *Punta di Castagnola,* between *Pallanza* and *Intra.* Owner Marchese della Valle di Casanova.

### VARESE

*Giardino Pubblico,* in centre of town. Always open.

*Palazzo Recalcati,* a mile outside the town. Hotel.

### BISUSCHIO

*Villa Cicogna,* on the edge of the town which is about five miles from *Varese.* Owner Conte Cicogna. Visitors usually admitted.

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

### LAGO DI COMO

*Town of Como, Museo Civico or Palazzo Giovio.*  
Open to public.

*Villa Balbianello*, on a promontory not far from Tremezzo. Owner Mr. Butler Ames, an American. Open to public one day a week.

*Villa Carlotta*, between Tremezzo and Cadenabbia.  
Open to public.

*Villa Pliniana*, near Torna. Open occasionally.

*Villa d Este*, at Cernobbio. Now a hotel.

*Villa Giulia or Zena*, near Bellagio. Admission sometimes granted.

*Cloister at Piona*, on a point not far from Colico.

### INVERIGO

*Villa Crivelli*, outside the small town which is six miles from Erba.

### LAGO DI GARDA

*Palazzo Martenengo* at Salo. Owner Conte Martenengo-Cesaresco.

*Villa S. Vigilio*, near the town of Garda.

### ON THE RIVIERA

#### MENTONE

*Villa Rosmarino, Route de Garavan.* Owner Mr. G. Thorpe Wilson. Not open to public.

*Villa Bellavista, Route de Garavan*, next to *Villa Ros-*



## GARDEN ITINERARY

*marino*. Gardens and water-stairway laid out by Mr. Harold Peto. Sometimes accessible.

### VENTIMIGLIA

*La Mortola* or *Villa Hanbury*. Open to public on Friday afternoons.

### EZE-SUR-MER

*Villa Balsan*. Garden designed for Monsieur and Madame Balsan by Monsieur Duchêne. Not open to public.

### BEAULIEU

*La Berlugane*, near the bay. Owner Comte Gautier-Vignal, who sometimes admits strangers upon written application.

### CAP FERRAT

*Villa Rosemary*, near the end of the point. Owner Sir John Ward, who sometimes admits visitors upon written application.

*Maryland*, beyond the *Villa Sylvia*. Used to belong to Mrs. Arthur Wilson. Visitors only admitted upon written application.

*Villa Sylvia*, *Cap Saint Jean*. Owner Mrs. Ralph Curtis. Possibly accessible upon written application.

### NICE

*Abbaye de Roselande*. Owner Monsieur Larcade. Architect Monsieur O. Godart. Special permission necessary.



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## GARDEN ARCHITECTS

- 1396-1472 Michelozzo Michelozzi  
1409-1464 Rosellino  
1444-1514 Donato Bramante  
1445-1516 Giuliano Giamberti da San Gallo  
1475-1564 Michelangelo  
1481-1537 Baldassare Peruzzi  
1485-1541 Antonio Cordiano da San Gallo, the Younger  
1485-1520 Raphael Sanzio (Raphael)  
1485-1550 Il Tribolo (Niccolo Pericoli)  
1487-1570 Domenico Sansovino  
1492-1546 Giulio Romano  
1507-1573 Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola  
1507-1563 Fra G. A. Montorsoli  
1509-1579 Il Bergamesco (Giovanni Battista Castello)  
1511-1592 Bartolommeo Ammanati  
    -1584 Annibale Lippi  
1512-1572 Galeazzo Alessi  
XVI Cent. Martino Lunghi  
1518-1580 Andrea Palladio  
1536-1608 Bernardo Timante Buontalenti  
1541-1604 Giacomo della Porta  
    -1622 Giovanni Vansanzio  
1543-1607 Domenico Fontana  
    -1635 Giulio Parigi  
1556-1629 Carlo Maderno  
1570-1655 Girolamo Rainaldi  
1592-1654 Alessandro Algardi  
1598-1680 Giovanni Bernini

## ITALIAN PLEASURE GARDENS

- 1599-1677 Francesco Borromini  
1604-1682 Baldassare Longhina  
1634-1714 Carlo Fontana  
XVII Cent. Girolamo Frigimelica  
XVII Cent. Carlo Castelli  
XVII Cent. F. M. Prati  
1699-1788 Ferdinando Fuga  
1704-1780 Carlo Marchione  
1729-1812 Andrea Tagliafichi

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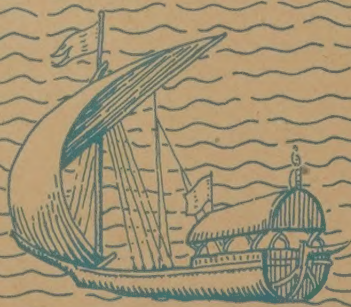
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